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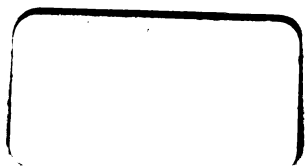
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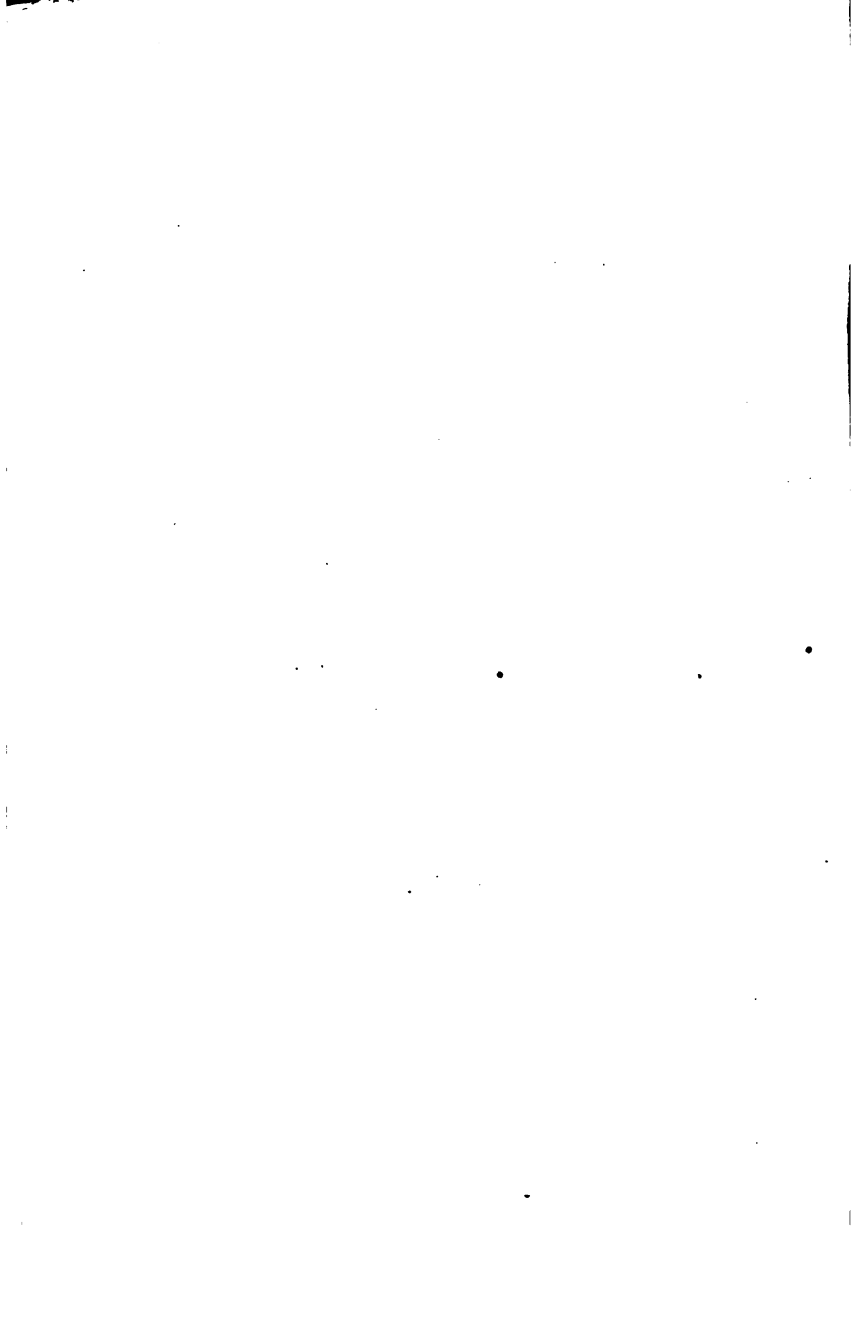
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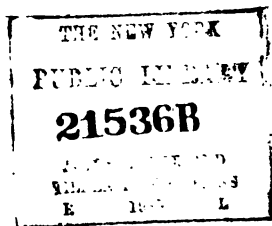


POVERTY GRASS

BY
LILLIE CHACE WYMAN, 817 -



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1886



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To
MY BROTHERS,
THE LIVING AND THE DEAD,
WHO HAVE KNOWN WHERE POVERTY GRASS GREW,
I DEDICATE
This Book.

1911

PREFACE.

IN writing the contents of this book, I have tried very sincerely to describe correctly the life which I knew best, and which appealed most strongly to my imagination. The stories have arisen one after another in my mind, as birds might arise from some unseen nook in the fields, and pass over a cloudless sky. I have written them as they came, as I might have drawn pictures of the birds as they flew, not always noticing whether each new comer followed the course which the others had taken in their flight. Now, however, that the writing is done, and the stories are brought together, I perceive that some impulse of my mind has directed them so that they have a sequence and form a series. They drift in one current.

They are studies of people of different races who have been more or less subject to hard

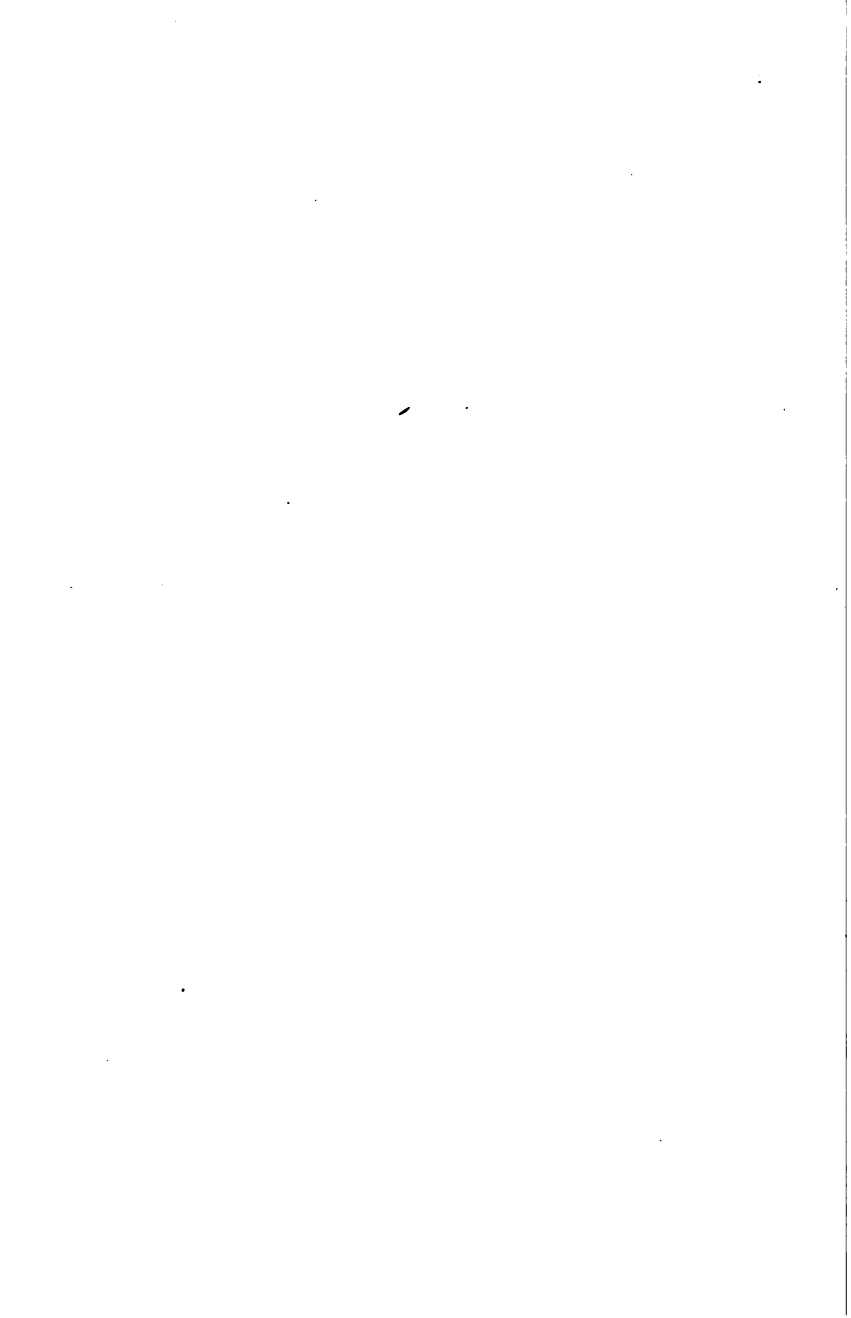
conditions as they have successively occupied, if they have not possessed, that portion of New England with which I am most familiar. I have endeavored to depict the characters and feelings of persons who struggle against odds, and reach whatever growth they attain through difficulty. Hence, I have called my book by the name of that grass which gains nourishment from the sands wherein other plants perish.

I have told of evil and of pain, but I have deemed that I should be very untrue if I did not tell also of grace and goodness and of the beauty which "rims" all "things with mystical hues." I have tried to be both realistic and ideal, because I believe that the ideal is the most real element in life.

If I have had a motive or a purpose beyond those implied in what I have already said, it has been that I might help ever so slightly to make the fortunate ones of this world know the less happy ones well enough to sympathize with them. If, therefore, the question shall arise in the mind of any reader, whether by individual effort or through changes in the so-

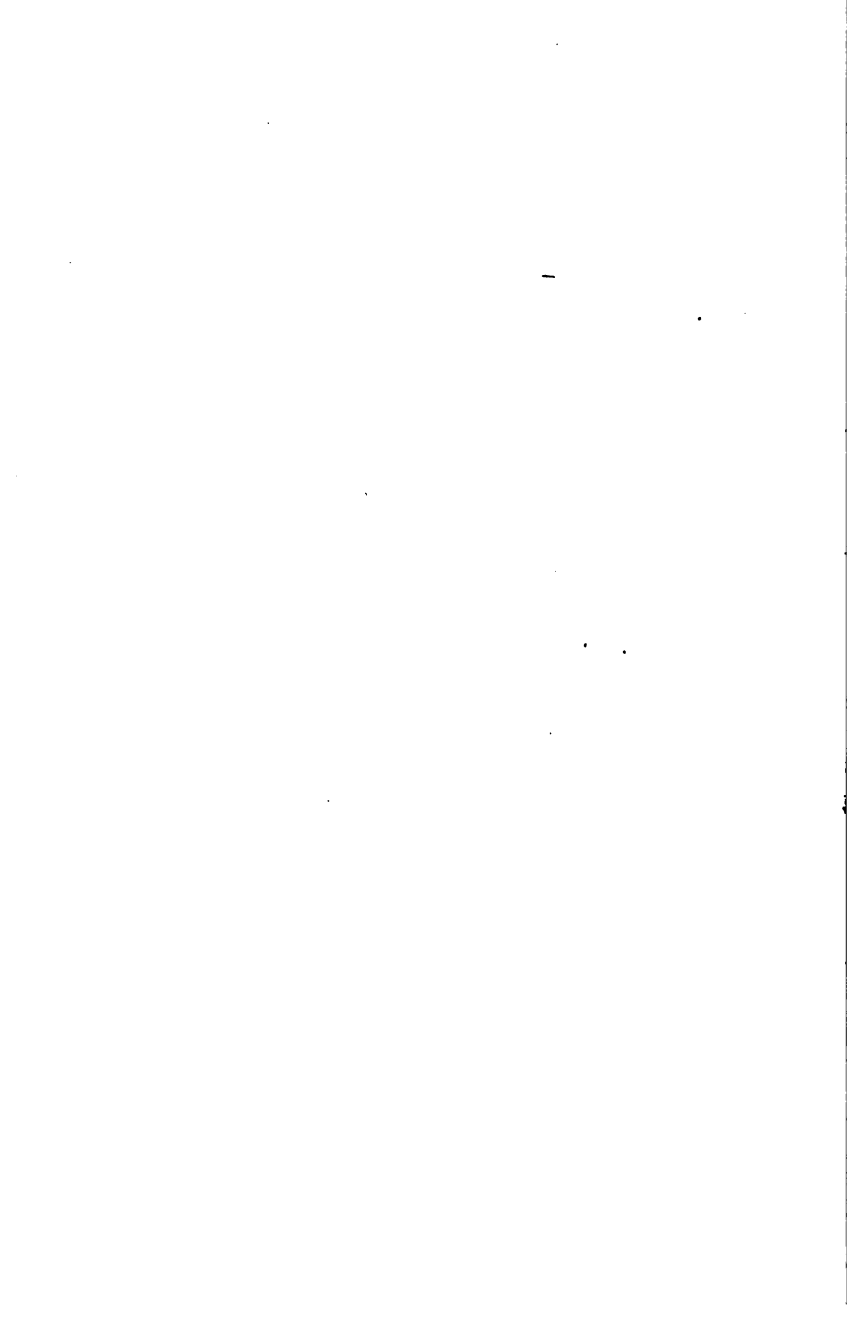
cial organization the burdens that weigh upon the toilers of our country may be lightened, I shall rejoice and be exceeding glad.

Finally, it is with true earnestness that I commend to whomsoever I may the children of my heart, whose unsubstantial breath lies on these pages as the races which they represent — Yankee, English, Irish, and French — have dwelt on the dear soil of our beloved New England.



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HESTER'S DOWER.

"HERE comes Jeremiah Razee. I'll just run an' ask him to take the yarn to the village, if you 'll get it ready, Hester."

So saying, Mrs. Burrill rushed out bare-headed to the road. She stopped the farmer as he came along in his market wagon, and explained to him that Mr. Burrill and all the men were busy, and if the yarn was not taken to the weavers soon, Patience and Wait would have no dresses for winter. As she chatted on, Hester Arnold came out of the house, bringing two large bundles, which she handed with an ungracious air to Mr. Razee.

"I'll leave 'em with Mowry," said he.

"An' tell him," said Mrs. Burrill, "to weave one piece all blue, an' have the warp red an' the fillin' blue in the other."

"I guess I'll remember," replied Mr. Razee, stowing away the bundles, and adding, as he leaned over the wagon seat, with his face turned

from her, "How do ye do, Hester? Stayin' with Mis' Burrill?"

"Yes," answered Hester, shortly.

"Shubael's kinder poorly," pursued the farmer, with apparent irrelevancy. "It's dretful onconvenient, his bein' sick jest now; but, somehow, Shubael never was handy at choosin' the right time for doin' anything." Hester flushed angrily; the farmer smiled grimly, and went on: "'Tain't near so bad as havin' Jabez sick would ha' ben; but then Jabez would n't ha' ben sick afore the fall work was done."

"You and he are pretty smart," said Mrs. Burrill.

"Bear our years putty well? Yes, I'm more of a hand at work now than Shubael when he's well, for all he's twenty years younger 'n me. I expec' it was the pettin' mother gin Shubael, he bein' her baby, that kep' him from toughenin'. A good seasonin' to work an' worry don't hurt no boy, an' often makes the man. Wal, I guess I must be goin'!"

"I sent word," said Mrs. Burrill, "to Shubael, this mornin', to come here an' make us all some shoes, as soon as he could. Otis got in the leather last week."

"Oh, I guess he's well enough to do that now," said Mr. Razee, thoughtfully. "I'll see that he comes round to-morrow."

The farmer gathered up his reins, nodded, and drove off. Mrs. Burrill turned to Hester.

"Come in, now," she said, "an' we'll go to work in airnest, to make the hog puddin's, so we can dip candles to-morrow, an' get through before Saturday's bakin'."

Hester Arnold was the tailoress from the village. She was a straight, tall, dark, handsome woman of thirty-five. Just now, an angry light glittered in her eyes. She knew what Farmer Razee meant by saying that Shubael had never chosen the right time to do anything. She remembered very well the day, fifteen years before, when Shubael had asked her to marry him, and she, furious from some quarrel with Jeremiah, who also courted her, had refused the man she had loved ever since she had fought childish battles for him. Shubael had no energy, and when Hester, the only person, except his mother, who had ever believed in him, fell away from him angrily he was utterly downcast, and sank at once into the character he had ever since maintained of harmless ne'er-do-well. Hester long hoped he would come back to her, but he never had the courage. Jabez never married. Jeremiah, after Hester had refused him, straightway took a wife, who toiled for him several years, and then died childless,—a desert life that left no trace! Shubael assisted in the

farm work, and made shoes at odd times. He also solaced his dreary days by writing doggerel verses, which, when written, he hid carefully from the scornful eyes of his brothers.

When Mrs. Burrill and Hester Arnold reëntered the kitchen, they found a brass kettle that would hold half a dozen gallons swinging over the fire. It was nearly full of milk, and a tall, gaunt woman stood busily stirring it. She looked up, and said, "It's all ready for the things to go in. Sech a beautiful kettle! I never seed nothin' so lovely. I can't keep my eyes off it. Wal, things does go in a curious, contrary way in this world. If I had married the man o' my ch'ice, *I* might ha' had a brass kettle; but now I'm nothin' but poor, forlorn, forsaken Mose Almy's wife, — nothin' to cook, an' nothin' to cook it in."

With this dismal lament, the woman who had come in to "help" turned back to her stirring.

"I should think 't was more 'n brass kettles might be got by marryin' the man o' your choice," said Hester. When she had said this she flushed a little, and went rapidly to work, bringing molasses, chopped suet, raisins, allspice, and Indian meal, which were to be boiled in the milk.

"The children must go for oak leaves," said

Mrs. Burrill, as the afternoon wore away ; and Hester looked out of the window and noticed that a great many leaves had fallen the night before.

Rhode Island farmers used very little white flour at this time, and the great loaves of brown bread which they ate, made of rye and Indian meal, were baked in a brick oven on oak leaves. The leaves were laid on a wooden shovel, the dough was built up on them, and then the shovel was pushed into the oven, and dexterously withdrawn, leaving the bread on the leaves, which marked the bottom of the loaves when baked.

"I'll go with the children," said Hester.

"Are you het up?" asked Mrs. Burrill, who could imagine no other reason for wanting to take a walk in the cool autumnal afternoon.

Hester said "Yes," and went out with the little girls. "Mose Almy's wife" put on her faded hood and walked with them down the road till they stopped under a wide-spreading oak-tree. Then she plodded on, hoping to get home in time to have her husband's supper ready, when he should come in from the tin-shop, where he tinkered the worn-out milk pails of the neighborhood. She carried some milk and eggs, the payment of her day's labor, and inwardly exulted at having something to cook.

Hester and the children had slender sticks, each sharpened at one end and having a crotch at the other. They turned over the fallen leaves, chose the largest and most perfect, and strung them on their sticks. When full, the sticks would be hung up in the Burrill garret, to be used as wanted, till the autumn came again. Hester loved the work, for she and Shubael Razee had, in their childhood, gathered leaves together, and gloated over the beauty of their treasures.

With a heart full of memories, she busied herself, and the children ran back and forth, shouting cheerfully, when they heard the rumbling of a wagon, and Hester looked up and saw Jeremiah Razee driving along the road. On the seat beside him sat Shubael. To her surprise, Jeremiah drew up his horse violently at sight of her, and descended to the ground, throwing the reins to Shubael, who took them without lifting his eyes.

As Jeremiah walked towards Hester, she started away, feeling defiant and alarmed, but he stopped her. "Hester," said he, in a low tone, "you may tell Mis' Burrill I took her yarn an' gin her message all straight. We're on our way now to the village. I want to git my tire reset, an' Shubael has broke his best awl, an' must git another ef he's goin' to make shoes."

Hester perceived a slight embarrassment in the farmer's manner, and grew cool. She answered in loud, clear tones, which the shame-faced man in the wagon could not fail to hear : —

“ I really have n't the least desire to know why you 're goin' to the village, Mr. Razee. I never was particularly interested in *your* movements, you know ; and I can't say that I am very much concerned about Shubael's awl neither, as he don't even take pains to speak to me.”

Shubael raised his head at this, and something like a manly gleam came into his dull eyes.

“ I don't speak to you now, Hester,” he said, “ but I will when Jeremiah has had his say.”

“ Hold your tongue ! ” shouted Jeremiah, and poor Shubael cowered a little. Hester was certainly made of strange stuff that her heart did not grow cold to the timid man, but there are some women to whom love is like death. Once struck by it, nothing cures them.

“ I don't see the need of anybody's saying anything,” said she, inconsequently.

“ But I do ! ” growled Jeremiah, coming closer to her. “ I want a few things settled afore Shubael goes to Mis' Burrill's to make them shoes. Be you ready to listen to me, at

last? You know as well as I do that I hain't been shif'less nor behindhand in my affairs, an' you could n't do better. An' so the long an' short of it is, will you marry me? I hain't nothin' to say agin my wife, — she was a good woman an' a good worker; but you know that I never see the woman that I thought fit to hold a candle to you."

Hester wickedly let him go on with his declaration till he brought it to a full stop himself. She had a fierce delight in the moment. His agitation and the unseemly manner of his proposal showed her that he feared to have Shubael go to Mrs. Burrill's while she was there. Perhaps they had had words about her! Jeremiah's fear shot hope into Hester's heart.

She spoke again in a loud, clear tone: "No, Mr. Razee; you had my answer long ago."

Jeremiah started towards her, as if he would stop her scornful mouth, but she laughed bitterly in his face. He grew very white, and stood still looking at her. Shubael, at this moment, sprang from the wagon, and walked rapidly to the woman, and held out his hand.

"I'm only a broken-down man," he choked, "but — will you have me?" She silently laid her hand in his.

The elder brother jumped into his wagon, struck the horse heavy blows, and drove away.

As the wagon rattled over the brow of the adjacent hill, Hester and Shubael turned to see the two little girls staring, wide-eyed, frightened and amazed.

"Never mind that old fellow," said Hester, with a trembling laugh. "And let's pick up the oak leaves for Patience and Wait, just as we used to, when we were no bigger 'n they, Shubael."

So these two were engaged, to the astonishment of the country folk, and Jeremiah's wrath waxed ever greater as the days went by. The Burrill children reported all they had comprehended of the strange scene they had witnessed, so that it came to be generally understood that Hester had refused Jeremiah in the very presence of his brother. Some jeering speeches about it were made to the old farmer, who swore that he would yet take his revenge on the woman. These threats were reported by Mose Almy's wife, but Hester only laughed in downright contempt,—a laugh of which, in turn, old Razee was told, and his evil passion blazed yet higher.

Five weeks after their engagement the lovers were married. They hired a house with Mose Almy, and set up their humble home. The winter wore happily away. The luckless Moses and the helpless Shubael took kindly to each

other. Hester did her own work, and tried to infuse some order into the proceedings of the Almy half of the house. She still took in sewing, but also laid up stores of homely household wealth for herself, — linen and braided mats, and yarn ready to be woven. She was not a demonstrative woman, but the shoemaker whom she served in such a wifely way was a living poem to her. His gentle manner, his pathetically feeble fancies, embodied for her all that was beautiful and lovable under heaven, while she seemed to him wholly adorable in her strength and potency.

When spring came, Hester withdrew her money from the village bank and gave it to Shubael, bidding him buy a lot of land and straightway begin to build a house. He stared blankly at her, as she put the savings of years into his hands. She laughed heartily, and said, "That's the one thing that keeps me from bein' sorry I did n't marry you when you asked me first. If I had I should never have had anything to give you."

At this tender speech, the Yankee shyness of the husband melted; and he kissed his wife. He had long before spent his paternal inheritance, and before his marriage had lived with his brothers, a mere day-laborer on their land. Now, some homesick instinct prompted him, and

he bought of them a corner of the old farm on which to erect his humble dwelling. It was a very little house, but in the fall Hester and her husband moved into it with unmixed pride and satisfaction. There they spent six contented months, and then the shoemaker fell ill. It was spring fever, the wife said, as she nursed him; but spring passed, June came, and he grew no better, till at last a bitter truth forced itself into her consciousness with that unrelenting persistency with which bitter truths will intrude.

When the July heat was fiercest, Shubael sank rapidly. "I guess," he said one day, gasping in the hot air that burned his throat, — "I guess heaven 'll be cooler than this 'ere world, and may be it 'll suit me better, somehow, — may be it will. I was allus a round peg in a square hole here, Hester, except for you;" and a faint, spiritualized smile conveyed his tender gratitude for the love that had "suited" his latter days so well. In a moment he spoke again, while the dark, handsome woman hung over him with yearning eyes. "I guess, Hester," he said, "I sha'n't find nothin' in heaven that I 'll like better 'n I've liked you. Jeremiah kep' us apart a long time. I never telled you just how. But I got tired o' bein' alone. I'd get tired o' bein' alone in heaven. So I hope you won't keep me waitin' long."

"I'd go with you, if I could," she whispered.

"Yes," he said, smiling feebly again. "You'd make it seem more home-like among all the angels, an' the jewels, an' the music."

When the cool of the evening came mercifully down, Hester sat alone by her husband's body.

Jabez and Jeremiah had never spoken to Hester or Shubael after the marriage, but the brothers attended the funeral. They waited in the yard, till the minister was about to begin, when they came solemnly into the house, each holding his hat with the knotted fingers of his large, brown hand. They sat down side by side, and crossed their legs at the same instant. Hester was very near them, and she felt a thrill of repugnant pain shoot through her. The minister opened the Bible, and the two men settled the hard lines of their leathery faces into still harder fixedness. They did not seem to breathe, and their eyes stared steadily over Shubael's coffin as if it were not there. The widow's heart swelled. Could she not be free from the agony of hatred even in this one hour of bereavement? The presence of Jeremiah Razee at that moment outraged her. It blighted her

natural and wholesome grief, turning it into unseemly wrath and pain. He stood between her and her dead love, she passionately thought, as for many years he had stood between her and her living lover. She wanted to rise up and command him to go forth and leave to her what was her own.

The eyes of the assembled neighbors constrained her to be still. The New England sense of decency was strong within her. She was determined to make no scene by Shubael's body, and so was enabled to control every nerve and muscle, while the service proceeded.

At the grave, the brothers were again near her. Thus far, they had exchanged no word with her, but when the interment was finished, each took her hand and then solemnly dropped it. Still she endured in silence.

The Burrills took her back to her deserted home, and left Patience with her. When night fell, Hester went into her room and shut the door. She loathed herself, for having been so moved by hatred, when her soul should have been filled with soft and sacred emotion. She felt that she had been robbed of something. Her grief had been defiled. Thoughts of Jeremiah Razee rushed over her, stamping out sweet and tender memories, like the feet of swine trampling on lovely young live things. She

hated herself, because she could not stop thinking of him, but more she hated him for causing such evil passion to enter her heart, at such a time.

"He spoilt Shubael's life, an' he spoils my sorrow," she muttered, and then suddenly all the stern composure of her blood gave way. The dark hours slowly passed, but only God — and it may be Shubael's ghost, also — beheld her in the abandonment of her rage and grief.

She came out in the morning, very quiet, but with pale face, and hollow eyes.

Four days after the funeral Jeremiah Razee knocked loudly at the widow's door. Hester opened it herself, and turned her hard eyes on the farmer's face.

"Why do you come now?" asked she.

The farmer smiled with slow malice, and shifted his weight from one foot to the other, as he stood on the little stone step, which Shubael and Hester had laid in place together.

"I come on business," said he, at last.

"I hain't no business with you, nor never mean to have!" retorted the widow.

"No?" said he, inquiringly. "Wal, I've business with you. Shall I step in?"

"No. Whatever you have to say, you may say here."

"Eh? Wal, I guess not. I guess I'd rather walk in."

"You sha' n't do no such thing."

"Wal, I kin wait a little about that. Shubael did n't leave no will, did he?"

"It's none o' your business!" cried Hester.

"Yes, it is some o' my business. Because, if he did n't, the biggest part of this house an' lot happens to belong to me 'n' Jabez. I hain't said nothin' about it afore. Waited till now, thinkin', if there was a will, you'd be glad enough to perduce it. I s'pose you know you've only got your widder's dower, if there ain't no will."

"My widow's dower!" cried she. "Why, I gave Shubael every cent he had to buy this land, an' most of the money for the house; an' the rest of it we earned together, he makin' shoes an' I sewin', after we was married. He had n't but three dollars when he married me."

"No, I calk'lated not. He never was forehanded, an' never saved nothin'. I allus told him he was a fool not to lay up for a rainy day, but luck stood him in stead of thrift. He was lucky in marryin' you, — luckier 'n some other folks was, then. But now he's dead, an' it's my turn."

Dazed and furious, Hester cried in a low voice, "You wretch! Do you mean to talk of such things, and Shubael only four days in his grave?"

Then she turned away, and sobbed as she had never sobbed since her husband died.

"Wait till you're axed, ma'am, afore you think a man wants to marry you," said Jeremiah, slowly. "What I mean is that Jabez an' me owns two thirds of this house an' lot now, as Shubael's heirs, an' you have the use of one third for life, and that's all. You can stay here if you want to, by payin' rent for the other two thirds. We won't turn you out, but if you choose to go I've got a tenant in my eye, an' you'll have your share of the rent he pays. As for the furniture, you own half, an' I'll send up the officer, this arternoon, to make an inventory, an' divide it square. I won't walk in now, as you don't seem hospitable in your feelin's; but p'raps you'll remember, arter I'm gone, how many times you've thought you'd got the best of me."

When he had finished, the farmer turned away, walked through the little yard out into the road, got into his wagon, which waited there, and with a grim smile drove on to the village.

When he was out of sight, Hester went into

the house, and, though she knew that her husband had never made a will, searched in every possible and impossible place where one might be hid. After this fruitless task was done, she put on her bonnet and walked to the village. The day was sultry, the air was hot, but her heart was hotter still. She stopped and told her story to Mose Almy's wife, whom she asked to go back to the house she had left, lest the man should come to make an inventory, and find it unguarded. Mrs. Almy, full of sympathy, willingly left her house in frightful disorder, and her seven small children gloriously happy in the dirt, and departed for Hester's cottage.

The widow went to Mr. Burgess, the village lawyer, and related her grievance.

"You can't help yourself," said he. "The law is on their side."

She twisted a fold of her gown in her hand a moment. "Will you come back with me," she said at last, "an' see that there ain't no cheatin' done this afternoon?"

They found Mose Almy's wife standing in the dooryard, gesticulating furiously, and screaming at the top of her voice. Jeremiah Razee and the officer were confronting her doggedly.

"You sha'n't come in here, neither on ye," shrieked Mrs. Almy, — "not till Hester gets

here! You 're nothin' but a couple of mean, sneakin' thieves, both on ye!"

Jeremiah turned to Mr. Burgess, as he entered the yard with Hester; but before he could speak she walked by them all, flung open the house door, and called to them to come in. She followed them round, as they went from room to room. She opened every chest and drawer. She verified every memorandum that the officer made, and finally dismissed him with bitter politeness.

"He 's only hired," she said; then turning to Jeremiah, with blazing eyes, "but between you 'n' me the account ain't settled yet."

"No," said the farmer, "it ain't. John Bates is the man I spoke of to you this mornin', as wantin' to hire the place. He 's concluded that two thirds of the house will do for him. His family ain't large, an' he 'll move in next week, an' you kin live in the other part without payin' no rent. There 's six rooms in the house. You kin have any two you like."

Mr. Almy gasped with amazement, and Mr. Burgess said, "I think you 're rather stretching your authority."

"We 'll see," answered Jeremiah, putting his hands in his pockets. "You ain't the only lawyer in the county. Any way, she owes me 'n' Jabez rent for every day she stays here 'n' keeps the house empty."

"Where is Jabez?" asked Mr. Burgess.

Jeremiah looked a little embarrassed, and Hester said quietly, "I guess he was ashamed to come. It takes such as *him*!" and she pointed at Jeremiah, who fell back slightly cowed.

"The widow has a right to stay for a time without paying rent," said Mr. Burgess.

Jeremiah looked up, surprised, and the lawyer explained to him that he could not carry out his plans for some months yet. Mrs. Almy uttered a cry of triumph, but Hester stood in unmoved silence, till the farmer, somewhat discomfited, took his leave. When he had gone, Hester looked at Mr. Burgess and asked simply, "Will you tell me how it is? I want to understand all about it, and how it comes that I don't own the land I bought, nor the house I built."

The lawyer went over the legal details in a painstaking manner, and dwelt at length on the one mercy the law granted her, that she might stay in the house unquestioned for some time yet.

"But after that I owe him rent for every day?" she asked. He assented, and she said, "Thank you. That'll do. I understand now. I'll pay you, Mr. Burgess, when I've earned some money."

"It is no matter," he said. "I wish I could do more for you."

Then he too went away, and Mrs. Almy sought to console Hester, offering to stay all night, and let her spouse and offspring shift for themselves as best they might.

"I'd rather stay alone, please," was Hester's reply; and gently thanking her for all her kindness, she let the woman go. In the same quiet way she met and dismissed Mr. and Mrs. Burrill, when they came later on an errand of sympathy. When they too had gone, she sat down a little while in the kitchen. From that room she went into the tiny sitting-room, and thence to her own bedroom. In each she stayed a few minutes, sitting quite motionless, and all the time she seemed to see Shubael moving about before her, as he had been wont to do. After a time she dragged out from her room an old chest that had been her husband's. She had difficulty in getting it through the doors, and she remembered how she and Shubael had tugged at it together to bring it in. She persevered, and pulled it out of the house, through the yard, and across the road. Then she went back, gathered together Shubael's clothing, a few books, some papers on which he had written his ill-spelt verses, and a few pieces of china. This incongruous collection, with some of her own clothes, she carried and put in the chest. She shut down the lid of the box and nailed it fast.

Next, she rolled and corded the mats, and dragged them and some of the lighter furniture out. She took the tall clock to pieces, and carefully conveyed that also across the road. After this she stood still, and sobbed once or twice. It was nearly morning now, and Hester's motions were a little hurried, as she went back into the house, and tied up a bundle of her linen and blankets. She went into the kitchen, and looked round on the things which were left.

"I guess," she said aloud, resting her hands on her hips, — "I guess I've left a full half in value here."

Then she brought from the woodshed a quantity of small wood, of which she made two great heaps, one on the kitchen floor, and the other in the sitting-room. She emptied round them a barrel of corn-cobs, and strewed about a quantity of shavings. She next took a burning stick from the fireplace, where she had been careful to keep alive a fire, carried it to the sitting-room door, and flung it in upon the pile of light wood. With another brand, she deliberately lighted the kindlings on the kitchen floor. Then, drawing her skirts close around her, she went out of the door, and closed it behind her. She crossed the road, and sat down on Shubael's chest. A red glow shone through the kitchen window,

and a fainter light came from the other room. She stared steadily till all the house was lighted. It was many minutes before a flame leaped from the roof, but till she saw it she did not turn her eyes away. Then she covered her face, and waited, while the sun rose before her in the east, and sent his beams across the flames.

Ten minutes after sunrise Jeremiah and Jabez Razee came running up the road. Hester, in her black dress, sat quietly, with her household goods around her.

"How did it ketch?" screamed Jeremiah, while still afar off.

Hester was silent till the brothers were quite near, and then answered, "I set it on fire. Shall we settle up accounts now, Mr. Razee?"

"You set it on fire!" he cried. "But who saved these things?"

"I brought out my half before I lighted it," said Hester.

Jeremiah swore. Jabez, who was a church member, uttered a more pious ejaculation.

"I *will* settle with you!" said Jeremiah, shaking his fist in the woman's face. She answered with a disdainful look, and the two men sat down sullenly near Hester, and gazed at the flames, till in a few minutes a troop of neighbors arrived on the scene; Mose Almy's wife in front, and the Burrills not far behind.

Jeremiah then rose, and started for the village. In an hour he came back with the constable. Hester was still in the road, surrounded by her friends. To the consternation of the crowd, she was formally arrested for arson. She had not foreseen this consequence of her act, but instantly perceiving the situation, she rose calmly to follow the officer.

"Take care of them things," she said quietly to Mrs. Almy. "You can give 'em store-room while I'm gone, can't you? And don't you never let Jeremiah Razee lay his finger on 'em."

Some women began to cry, and Mr. Burrill stepped up to Jeremiah, and said fiercely, "You 're the meanest critter I ever see!"

"That's my lookout," answered Jeremiah. "It's the law."

"May be it is the law," said Mr. Burrill, "that a woman's own property don't belong to her; but as men are all sinners, I s'pose it's nigh abaout as easy for 'em to sin makin' laws as any other way."

Hester was taken to the county jail in the city, twelve miles off, in due time was brought to trial, and was sentenced to imprisonment for two years. Some of her old neighbors wanted to get her pardoned; but they were simple country people, and hardly knew how to approach the state magnates, so nothing effectual was

done, and she was allowed to serve out her dreary sentence.

Jeremiah Razee, thus left to taste the sweets of vengeance, found them less sweet than he had anticipated. His neighbors looked coldly on him. His unsocial heart could have borne that, but there was one thing that grew difficult for him to bear. Work as hard as he could, early and late, busy his mind as he would, calculating profits, he could not shut out from his eyes the sight of Hester as he had last seen her, in her widow's dress, a prisoner at the bar, under conviction. Her stern, pallid face rose with the dawn and looked at him; and the sun, sinking while the old man still toiled on his farm, left behind a trail of accusing light which showed that changed countenance to him. How changed! He remembered the dark-eyed child whose sunny ways had charmed even his morose nature. He drove back and forth over the country roads, as business called him here and there, and memories started up at the top of every hill, in every valley, under the shade of the old trees: memories of a handsome, happy girl, who had walked in the sunshine till he had spoiled her life; memories, too, of a timid, shrinking lad with beseeching eyes, whose manhood had withered away under his contempt. Once the old farmer had occasion to go to the

city, and was forced to pass the jail. He shuddered as he hurried by. In that jail, a disgraced outcast, labored Hester, whom he had known as a little child ; a convict now, because she had resented the law which gave to her enemy the fruits of her life's toil and patience. Jeremiah drove hard all the way home. The next day he astonished Jabez by telling him that he was going over the line to visit the Massachusetts branch of the family.

He went, and in two weeks returned, to his brother's still greater astonishment, with one of their second cousins as his wife. She was a tall, bony, hard-featured woman of forty, who spoke her mind freely on any point, and, having thus relieved it, went her way untroubled. When she heard Hester's story, which she had not known till after she was married, she told her husband emphatically that he ought to be ashamed of himself, and then never gave the matter another serious thought. Jeremiah, however, found that marriage had not driven that haunting face from his mind, and he was still conscious of a force stirring within him that made him less satisfied than of yore in contemplating his cattle and his crops. After a time his wife gave birth to a child, and died in the struggle. Jeremiah was smitten with terror and grief. He had not a particle of senti-

ment for his wife ; he had married her hoping to distract his mind from thoughts of Hester, but he felt as though her death were a judgment upon him.

He went to the bed, looked at his baby, and then sat down, and two tears squeezed their way out of his eyes.

" I never thought Jeremiah 'd feel anybody's death like he feels Sairy's," said Jabez to Mose Almy. Jabez was much surprised, but he was more surprised, as the days passed, to perceive that the old man took to muttering to himself, as he walked feebly about the house, and that he did not return to his farm work. He held the baby for hours, and Jabez looked on confounded. Once the mystified brother heard Jeremiah murmur to the child, " Ef you was a little girl, — ef you 'd ben a girl now " —

Jabez walked away, and told Mr. Burrill, who chanced to be at the farm, that Jeremiah was " all breakin' up."

But as the months rolled away, Jeremiah grew stronger, and crawled out to do a little of his accustomed work. His only real interest however was in the baby. Except that once, when he lamented that it was not a girl, he never seemed to see anything that was not perfect about the child. He cared for it himself, neglecting any other labor for this one. He called it always " Baby."

"Why don't you gin it a name?" asked Jabez.

"I ain't got no name for it," replied Jeremiah.

When the time of her sentence was over, Hester came from her prison. Mr. and Mrs. Burrill went for her on the day of her release, and brought her home. They reached the jail early in the morning, so as to get her back before noon. They carried her garments in which to array herself, but were shocked to see how stony and white she looked in the black gown they had brought. At her request they took her to Mose Almy's.

Mrs. Almy bustled about hospitably, laughing and crying by turns. She told all the country gossip, and proudly showed her newest baby.

"Ellen," she said, "after Mose's sister that died,—jest two weeks younger 'n Jeremiah Razee's boy. They do say, Hester, that the old man thinks a sight of that baby. Queer, ain't it? Takes care on him nights, jest like an old woman. It seems as ef he was comin' to his nateral feelin's at last."

"Comin' out on 'em, I should say," said Hester, with more weariness than vehemence in her tones. "All his nateral feelin's was hateful ones."

Towards night the widow wandered forth restlessly. She had not taken a walk for two years. It was autumn again, four years since she and Shubael had gathered the red oak leaves with hands that clasped among their spoils. The glory that she saw hurt her. The land was brimming full of sunshine, and its beauty mocked her. The garnered joy of the harvest basked on the hill slopes, — what had been the harvest of her life? She had reaped a crop she had not sown, and the hazy smile of the Indian summer was not for her.

On she went, till she came to a pasture of the Razee farm, close beside the little inclosure where her home had been. She leaned against the wall, and with yearning eyes looked over. The blood rushed to her heart and stopped its beating. She saw a man running from an infuriated bull. She saw other men rising upon her sight from all quarters, rushing to the rescue. She saw the man fall; she saw the animal reach him; she heard sharp reports. The bull rolled over in wounded agony. The pursuers caught up the fallen man. They bore him through the field. Hester climbed the wall and following soon reached them. They halted at last under an old apple-tree close to the wall that separated the pasture from the lot where the ashes of her home still strewed the ground.

She had no time to think. She was clearly conscious of nothing, but the impulse to help, till she found herself sitting under the apple laden boughs, the sunset light all about her, and Jeremiah Razee's head lying in her lap. They dared not move him further. He moaned as he lay there. He was fearfully mangled. If she stirred, he groaned with pain. The men bound his mangled limbs. The horror of it all overcame Hester. She held herself very still. Some one went for a doctor. There was reason to fear some internal injury besides the external wounds. A sort of animal sympathy for pain swelled the hysterical passion in the woman's heart. She put out her hand and smoothed the old man's pallid forehead. At her touch, he opened his eyes, and as he saw her a look of terror came into them, as though he had seen a ghost. He tried to move.

"Lay still, lay still," she said; "you musn't stir. We're doin' all we can for you."

"Is it really you?" he asked, in a frightened whisper.

"Yes," she said. "Don't let nothin' worrit you; jest keep quiet."

"Be you — out?"

"Oh, yes."

"I'm — glad," he said, with a long sigh, and closed his eyes. Sometimes he writhed with

pain, but the greater part of the time he lay motionless, almost as if he were asleep. His attendants worked over him, trying to ascertain the extent of his injuries and relieve them somewhat before the doctor came.

At last he looked up again at Hester's face. It was flushed, and her emotions gave it a softer aspect than he had seen it wear for long years. He spoke in a weak but determined voice, evidently meaning to have his say, in defiance of pain and ebbing strength; but he paused often, and shut back the groans with set lips.

"It ain't no use; I'm done for. Hester, it's jest the same as it allus was with me. I ain't no hand to ax anybody's pardon, but I never see the woman as I thought fit to stan' beside you. When you was a little red-cheeked gal, — cheeks like apples, — an' when you was a woman grown an' could n't abide me, jest the same; an' I hated you because I liked you, cur'us as it seems. I'm pretty tough. I can stand a good deal. But I guess it was wuss for me nor you, at last. It was thet what broke me down. Nothin' but thet. No, don't stop me, — I'm most done. Hester, there's that baby of mine. Somehow, a baby takes hold on ye tight with his little fists. I'd rather you'd bring him up nor anybody else. Will ye?"

"Yea, yes, I will," she cried.

He smiled slowly. "You kin call him Shubael," he said; "then he won't never put yo in mind o' me."

She sobbed. "I'll love him as if he was Shubael's son."

A little later, Jeremiah Razee, there, in sight of those memorial ashes, died peacefully, his head on Hester's knees, his white hair floating over her mourning dress.

SAINT OR SINNER.

IT worried Hannah Dean not to find her sister at the door when the factory "let out" one pleasant June evening. Hetty and she worked through the day in different rooms, but they always walked home together at night. Hannah was the more troubled because for the past week or two Hetty had acted strangely. At home she followed Hannah from room to room, and would not be left alone. At the mill, on the contrary, she avoided her sister, and spent all her spare time idling with Frank Cotter, a young machinist whom Hannah did not fancy. This evening, when Hetty was missing, Hannah feared that she had gone somewhere with Frank, and took her homeward path, thinking in a troubled mood of the pretty, wayward girl, and of their father's death, which had occurred two months before. But Tom Furness joined her, and his cheeriness drove away her care. He persuaded her to go rowing with him on the

river, after supper ; but the mother, Mrs. Dean, when she heard the plan, objected strenuously, because it was the prayer-meeting night, and Hannah ought to go to church. Hannah's pleading that she had been to prayer-meetings all her life and had never been in a boat on the river would have availed little had not Tom come to the rescue and persisted in taking her ; while the widow, who had not seemed to notice Hetty's absence, marched sullenly off to church, taking her third child, Patty, a weak-minded girl, of whom she was very fond. Tom and Hannah spent a happy hour, rowing through the twilight. He coaxed her to sing, and all the squalid anxieties of her life seemed to drop away into the deep, sweet shadows that fell over the water.

At last he drew his boat up on the shore, and they silently landed ; and, though they knew it not, their enchanted dream of youth and love was over. She never sang again.

They walked together down the river-side till they reached the church. There were lights in the vestry and the meeting was still in session.

"Let us go in," said Hannah ; and Tom consented.

They separated at the door, and Tom sat down among the men, while she crossed over to

the women's side of the house. She looked around for Hetty without finding her, but soon distinguished her mother at the end of one of the seats. A lamp hung suspended from the ceiling over the old woman's head, and the yellow, flickering light fell full on her hard old face, so dark and rigid, intense and pinched. Her hands were gloveless, and lay clasped right upon her knee. Her eyes were closed, and her lips moved in response to the prayer of Deacon Dudley, a white-haired old man who knelt near her. Patty's pretty, imbecile face was close to her mother's shoulder.

When the meeting was done Tom met Hannah at the gate. "Come with me; I've something to tell you," he said.

"What is it?" she asked, in vague alarm.

"Hetty had trouble with the overseer to-day, and he's turned her out of the mill. She's been slack at her work, and I guess she's been away from it more than you knew."

"With Frank Cotter?"

"I suppose so."

"But where is she now?"

"At Sue Flint's."

Annoyed at hearing this, since Frank Cotter boarded at Mrs. Flint's, Hannah went straight there with Tom.

She knocked at the kitchen door, and with-

out waiting for a response opened it and walked in with neighborly freedom.

Mrs. Flint, a raw-boned, weary-looking woman, sat on one side of the stove, and her husband, Jabez Flint, sat on the other. His mouth was drawn up and open on one side. His nose seemed to have forgotten which way it had originally meant to go, and at last, in sheer despair, it had given up trying to be a nose and had come to an end. His eyes stared vacantly in opposite directions. His forehead slanted back to the unkempt hair, which straggled forward to meet it in a vain attempt to give some harmony to the face. He smoked a short, black pipe, and he did not move when Tom and Hannah entered. Mrs. Flint, however, rose, greeted them, and pushed forward chairs. Tom sat down, but Hannah only steadied herself by the back of hers, and asked, "Is Hetty here?"

"Yes; she and Sue have just gone up-stairs to bed."

Hannah breathed more freely to learn that Hetty had not gone out with Frank Cotter.

"I should like to see Hetty," she said. "I've just heard about her trouble."

"Her trouble, eh!" exclaimed Mrs. Flint, sharply.

"Oh, did n't she tell you? Some trouble with the overseer that worried her," said Han-

nah, annoyed to find that she had revealed what Hetty had kept secret.

"Like enough she told Sue," said Mrs. Flint, "but I did n't take no notice when she come in; I was busy tendin' to him," indicating Jabez with her thumb.

"Have you been sick to-day?" asked Tom of the old man.

Mrs. Flint answered for her husband: "A dretful spell; he ain't quite come out of it yet. I don't know, sometimes, what we shall do."

No more was said for a minute, and then Hannah proposed going up for Hetty, and Mrs. Flint consented. Shortly afterwards the two girls came down-stairs together, and Hannah said quietly, "I've coaxed Hetty to go home with me, and we'll tell mother in the morning. Hetty's afraid mother will be vexed, but I guess not."

This speech was much braver than Hannah's heart. Tom looked at Hetty, and was startled to see how white the pretty face was.

They all walked home silently, and Hannah insisted that Tom should leave them at the gate.

"You are not fair, Hannah," said Tom. "You are always shutting me out when you are in trouble. Never mind, I'll come in some day." He suddenly stopped, kissed her, and turned away.

"Hetty," began Hannah, bending to her sister a face whose blush the darkness hid, "now tell me all about it. Was it about" —

"No, it was n't about Frank," broke in Hetty. "And yet it was too, I suppose. Any way, I was n't at my work regular, and there was a fuss to-day, and the boss just turned me off." She stopped, and even the night which concealed Hannah's blush could not hide her look of terror. "Oh, I don't dare go in."

"Hetty, Hetty, my poor girl, what have you done?"

"I have n't done anything."

"Then what are you afraid of?"

"Oh, I'm afraid, I'm afraid!" clinging desperately to her sister.

"Come round the house," said Hannah, "and we'll go up the back stairs, and nobody need see us."

"She'll come up in the night!" cried Hetty, catching her breath hysterically.

"Who'll come up?" asked Hannah, trembling.

"Mother, mother," whispered Hetty; "she'll poison me too."

And then, suddenly, both girls sank upon the ground, and stared at each other with white faces. Neither moved, while Hetty, in low, wild whispers, went on: "The night that

father died, I saw her go to the closet and get a bottle out of that little cupboard she always keeps locked, and I saw her pour something into a cup of tea, and I did n't think anything. Of course, I did n't. But she come and woke him up. I was just at the door, where I was standing still, so as not to wake him, and she did n't see me. She gave him the tea, and somehow I felt frightened then. You know how he grew worse that evening, and the doctors did n't know what was the matter. Oh, and after giving him the tea, she went to the window and opened it. The stars were very bright, and she threw something out, — I did n't see what. But a week ago I was round there, and I found the bottle, and it had some white powder in it, and it was marked 'Arsenic.'

"You don't know it was that she threw out."

"No, but I'm pretty sure, and I'm afraid of her."

"Show me the bottle."

Hetty rose slowly, and Hannah followed, staggering after her round the house.

Hetty poked about in the grass, where she had dropped the bottle on the spot in which she had found it. Hannah crouched against the house. Her hand trailed in some high clover growing there, and the dew on it felt like blood.

"There!" said Hetty at last, holding up a

small phial. Hannah took it, put it in her pocket, and rising led the way into the house.

Mrs. Dean and Patty had gone to bed and left a lamp burning on the kitchen table. Hannah fastened up the doors and windows, and as she did so Mrs. Dean called out from her room, the one under whose window they had just found the bottle, "This is a pretty time of night to come in! Is Hetty there?"

Hetty shrank and shivered, but Hannah answered, "Yes," took up the lamp, and mounted the stairs, while Hetty followed. When they had reached the room, Hannah closed the door behind them, took out the bottle, and read the fatal label.

Mrs. Dean was at this time about sixty years old. She could neither read nor write. She had been born in one of the worst neighborhoods of the State, — a squalid collection of some half dozen huts in the country, where the men and women herded together like cattle. She had drifted out of these surroundings, and, rather late in life, had married the son of a farmer of much better antecedents than her own. Her husband was a hard-working, inefficient man, and all the worldly prosperity of the family was due to her thrift. Mr. Dean had possessed a certain feeble-minded sensitiveness of organization. Repelled by his wife's stern character,

unable to share in the peculiar religious fervor which she always manifested, he had sought refuge in the affection of Hannah and Hetty; Patty always seemed to inspire him with repugnance and awe. There was nothing unpleasant about the girl. She would sit for hours crooning songs in a low, sweet voice, apparently seeing and hearing nothing. But she did see and hear, and would sometimes show that she had been keenly observing everything during the whole time she had been quiet; and it was probably this odd mingling of imbecility and shrewdness which produced in her father a species of nervous terror.

Mrs. Dean, on the contrary, manifested for Patty the only real tenderness she displayed in her family. For her only would she relax the stingy economy with which she presided over the household.

Mrs. Dean had fretted much, at first, over the expenses which her husband's illness involved. His health had been failing a long time, and for two years before his death he had not worked at all. Hannah, lying awake all this dreadful night, with the bottle labeled "Arsenic" hidden away among her clothes, remembered how the fretfulness had subsided as the months rolled on, and how a certain angry but silent acquiescence had marked her moth-

er's reception of every fresh call for medicine or medical attendance.

Hannah's thoughts suddenly reverted, at this moment, to a time when she was a child. An old man and his wife had lived some years in Mrs. Dean's family, with the understanding that they were to be cared for during life, and at their death Mrs. Dean was to receive the small sum of money they would leave behind.

Hannah remembered that once when the old woman, Betsey Jordan, had shown, with childish glee, some cloth which she had bought for a new cloak, Mrs. Dean had turned away, grumbling, "If you are n't more saving of your money than that, precious little will them get that feeds you."

It was just a week after this that, in the early morning, Mr. and Mrs. Jordan were found both dead in their bed. Hannah remembered her father's bending over the still, old faces, and saying, gently and sadly, —

"They went together, any way; but it's sudden, and makes the home feel lonesome."

The look on her mother's face as he spoke came even now before Hannah's eyes, and she understood it at last. These people were cousins of Tom Furness's mother. And Hannah, working slowly through this horrible mesh of circumstance, came to a new point to be con-

sidered, a new agony to be borne. Tom Furness ! She clutched the bedclothes and set her teeth. Tom Furness ! She raised herself and stared at Hetty, whose hysterical sobbings had long since subsided into sleep. For one moment, Hannah felt as if she could kill the girl for putting this fearful thing between Tom and herself. Only for a moment ; the next, she felt a horror of herself, which set her thoughts striving to find the path of her duty. Somehow, at last, through the black maze, it came clear to her that she was her mother's child, and must not breathe suspicion against her. Perhaps the suspicion was false, but that possibility only barred her the more from telling it. Tom and she must go apart forever. Patty must never know. Hetty's life must be freed from this dark shadow ; in atonement, perhaps, for her own late anger with her.

For the rest, one duty lay clear before Hannah : "Never to let it happen again." She said these words over and over, as if they might be a spell against fate. She would watch her mother till she died, so that the horrible impulse of crime, the avarice which prompted the impulse, should never be free to work again. She must ever keep in mind that human life might depend on her silent vigilance, and that the price of her silence might be blood. And

would she not also be guilty of that blood? Tom must go. Into that valley of the shadow of death which her life entered she could drag no lover.

It rained Sunday morning. Hannah did not dress for church. The other girls made ready to go with their mother. Hetty looked pale and frightened, and avoided Hannah's eye. She too was meditating a desperate resolve. Hannah sat sullen and still, and made no movement to accompany the little party. Her mother rebuked her sharply, but she answered that her head ached, and they left her sitting in the kitchen. In a few minutes Tom burst in at the door, shaking the rain off his coat and tossing his wet hat in before him. "I watched the folks go in to meeting," he said, "and saw you were not there. What's the matter? Is it Hetty?"

She stood silent, and so obviously agitated that he took both her hands in alarm. "No, no!" she cried, "you must n't think any harm of Hetty. She's a good girl. Indeed she is. Think what you like of me — of — the rest of us." She trembled, feeling how helpless she was, shut in the house alone with the man she loved. If they were only out, — out somewhere in the pitiless storm, and she could run from him forever, through the rain and wind,

and hide herself in the uttermost parts of the earth! But she could not flee. She must stand still and drive him forth under the angry sky. "Oh, Tom, Tom, go! For God's sake go, and don't ask me anything!"

"Hannah!"

"Yes, you are angry. I knew you would be angry, but it is all for your own sake."

"Good heavens! What is all for my sake?"

"That you must go. Tom, dear Tom, it is forever. You must marry some one else. You must never marry me. Oh, don't kill me by staying here any longer!"

"Tell me," he cried, as she sank sobbing on the floor before him, "what do you mean? Do you want me to leave you, so you may marry another man?"

"Me marry another man!" She sprang up as she spoke. "Who dared say I would marry another man? No, it is you who must marry."

"Wait till I've asked leave to do so," he said, sullenly. "I might take you at your word."

She shivered, but answered bravely, "God grant you may. Look! I will swear to you never to marry anybody else in the world, — but I can't marry you."

"What's your oath worth? You're breaking your promise to marry me."

"Oh, Tom, Tom," she moaned, "can't we part in peace? I have loved you all my life; I cannot quarrel with you, but we must part. Speak kindly to me first. You'll have plenty to think of and to be glad about after you've left me, but I'll have nothing pleasant to hope for, or to remember, — but just the thought of you. Give me one kind word to live on all my life long. I must live, Tom. I've something to do. Sometime, dear, if you and I live long enough, I'll tell you all about it. I don't know when I may be free to speak. I may die first, but if I live, I'll find you wherever you are and tell you. I hope you'll marry, Tom. It won't matter, then, when I tell my secret. I'll not come hankering for your love. You need not fear that, when you sit by your wife, in your own house. I'll only come to say why I sent you off when we both were young, and you and your wife will be glad and thank me for it."

He put his arms around her, and said, "Tell me your secret now."

She started from him. "No; if you came to me every day in the year, I'd never tell you. It is n't my secret."

"Well, marry me, and I'll never ask you what it is."

"Oh, Tom, such a thing could never be be-

tween husband and wife. Kiss me once, Tom. God bless you. Go now."

It was her hand that opened the door. He staggered out into the rain.

The day passed, as Sundays usually did at Mrs. Dean's, with dreary formality. In the evening, Hannah went to church with the others. When coming out, she saw Hetty stop and speak with Frank Cotter, but it did not trouble her. It seemed as if nothing would trouble her now.

But it might have troubled her, if she had heard what Hetty said that night, "Oh Frank, dear Frank, if you like me, I should think you'd pity me. You don't want me to go on this way, do you? It don't make you happy, does it, that I can't eat, nor I can't sleep? There's nobody but you as can help me, — an' if you won't, what's goin' to become of me? Oh, why ain't I got real friends like other folks has!"

Here she broke down sobbing, and Frank kissed her. Though this comforted her a good deal, she still shivered as she clung to him.

"Come along," he said then, "I was n't thinkin' of gettin' married yet awhile. Oh Lord, no! But I like you, an' I ain't goin' back on you if you're havin' a hard time of it."

He helped her over the low roadside wall, by which they stood. She tore her gown among the blackberry vines which grew about the stones, but she did not notice anything, but the gentleness of his grasping arms. The stars shone sweetly down, as she lifted her face to his, when they stood together in the seclusion of the field. She did not think about it, but she felt that his eyes were shining more sweetly than those stars. Hope had come to her heart. She began to believe that relief was close at hand.

“Now tell me all about it,” he said.

Monday morning dawned in beauty and brightness. The mill bells rang out through the clear air. Hannah asked Hetty if she should tell their mother of her dismissal from work. The girl answered shortly, “No, I’m going down to the mill. May be I can get a place.”

They went together to the factory, and separated at the door.

A little before noon Patty came wildly into the room where Hannah worked, and with agitation that almost made her face intelligent told her that Hetty had run away with Frank Cot-

ter that forenoon, and that they were already married.

"It is just as well," answered Hannah quietly, turning back to her work.

"Oh," sobbed Patty, "mother is taking on dreadful. Do come home."

Hannah rapidly arranged with the overseer, and left the mill with her sister. On the way Patty told her all she knew about the matter.

Frank and Hetty were now at Mrs. Flint's. They had come there an hour before, and had sent word to Mrs. Dean that they had been to the next town and had been married about nine o'clock that morning.

The girls found Mrs. Dean seated in the kitchen crying, and as Patty went up to her she sobbed aloud: "Oh, Patty, I'll have to go out scrubbing, in my old age, to get you a morsel to eat, now Hetty has gone."

"Are you going over to see Hetty?" Hannah asked.

"No," said Mrs. Dean. Hannah went upstairs, packed up some of Hetty's things, and brought the bundle down. The old woman took it from her daughter, opened it, and curiously examined its contents. "Where's her gold beads?" demanded the mother.

"I think likely she wore them," said Hannah.

Mrs. Dean muttered between her teeth. She

turned over the things, picked out some stockings, a new dress, two collars, and some of the better underclothing; then rolling up the poor remains of Hetty's slender wardrobe, she said, "You may take them 'ere to her, but she shan't have these; they cost too much."

"Oh, mother," said Hannah, her heart full of shame and trouble, "Hetty bought them with money she earned herself. And for her to go as a wife to Frank Cotter without any decent clothes! It would disgrace us all."

"She 's disgraced us already," said Mrs. Dean, with a low chuckle. "Let Frank Cotter dress his own wife, — I can't afford to. I don't want to die in the poor-house. It's likely she'll come to it yet. You may tell her she need n't look to me to keep her out. Patty shall have the things."

Hannah tied up the pitiful bundle, took it, and went out into the yard. She felt dizzy, and sat down for a few minutes on a stone, just inside the gate. Hearing quick steps, she raised her head, and saw Patty coming with Hetty's dress and the other clothes. A happy smile lighted the imbecile girl's face, and she sang softly as she came along.

"Mother 's queer," she said, with a low laugh; "Hannah must n't mind. Patty don't want the things. Take 'em to Hetty. Poor

Hetty! Take 'em to Hetty," she said again, as Hannah hesitated; "mother won't know." She laughed gleefully. "Hetty shall have them all. Poor Hannah won't be sorry any more."

Poor Hannah indeed! She knew it would not do to take the things. Mrs. Dean would be sure to miss them, and what if she were to be angry with Patty! what if her affection for her imbecile child should lessen!

Hannah picked out one or two trifling articles from the bundle, assured Patty that Hetty would not want the others, thanked her warmly, and went rapidly away to Mrs. Flint's.

She found Frank and Hetty sitting in solitary and rather uncomfortable state in Mrs. Flint's parlor. He came to meet her as she entered the room. Hetty hung back shamefaced.

"Do you think this is a bad business?" asked Frank, with a smile.

"I hope it is not."

Hetty ran forward at this, and kissed her sister warmly, murmuring praises of Frank. Hannah gave her the bundle, and told her what Patty had done, but softened the account of their mother's part in the transaction. Hetty listened sweetly, and said she was glad Patty was to have the dress; but she did not

• speak of her mother, and soon broke away and ran up-stairs with her clothes. Hannah looked at Frank.

“You ’ll be kind to her, and,” with hesitation, “you ’ll go away from New Bridge?”

“Yes,” he answered, “we are going to Orrinsville to-night. I shall look for work there, where I have friends.”

“That is best.”

“Oh, yes,” said Frank speaking deliberately; “I ’m sorry for you and Patty, but Hetty can’t stand what some could. She asked me to take her away.”

“Asked you!”

“Oh, she was right enough. I ’d given her reason to think I ’d marry her, and when I ’d got her into a scrape about her work I was bound to stand by her. I like her, besides. She ’s a good girl, and I could n’t leave her to be scared to death at home.” Frank knew! Hannah’s heart beat heavily as he continued: “I always liked you, Hannah, even though you did n’t like me. Hetty thinks you ’d better marry soon, and take Patty and come and live near us in Orrinsville.” His tone was truly brotherly. For an instant, a vision of heaven danced before Hannah’s eyes.

“No,” she said in a moment, “I must stay. I must see to it all, — watch things, you know.

"I've broken with Tom. He does n't know. He never shall know. I don't believe it ever happened, but anyway I must see that it never happens again. I don't believe it."

"Hannah, you're the right sort of woman," cried Frank; but he felt sure that Hannah did believe it.

Mrs. Flint and Sue and Hetty all came in just then, and Mrs. Flint proposed that she and Hannah should go and bring Patty there, and should, if possible, persuade Mrs. Dean to come. Neither Hetty nor Frank felt any desire to have Mrs. Dean's blessing rest upon their marriage day, and Hannah would gladly have kept these last few moments free from the shadow of her mother's presence; but they all felt that it would be unwise to oppose her coming.

Mrs. Dean was easily induced to let Patty go, and the girl darted gleefully off after her bonnet. When she was gone, Mrs. Dean asked, with an apparent effort to be unconcerned and neighborly, "How is Mr. Flint?"

"Dretful poorly," answered the unfortunate wife, and, eager to propitiate the widow, she spoke with less reserve than usual of her husband's illness, and told how he had two "spells" the last two days, and how he had fallen, in one of them, against the table which was set for dinner, and upset it, breaking the crockery and spilling soup all over her new rag carpet.

"I would n't have a man round doing like that," said Mrs. Dean, with a scowl.

"Why, what would you do?"

"Oh, there's ways. I'd still him down, somehow."

Hannah grew pale in her corner, and Mrs. Flint opened her eyes in wonder. Just then Patty came in, flushed and eager, and Mrs. Flint was recalled to her mission, and began to urge Mrs. Dean to go with them.

"No, I won't," said she, shutting her thin lips tight. There was an ominous gleam in her eyes, and Patty cried out, "Come away! mother won't care, when we come back."

II.

Tom waylaid Hannah twice on her way home from the mill, but she repelled his advances. Sometimes, afterward, she caught glimpses of him about the village. Always she wished he would come and speak to her. Always she shivered with fear lest he should come. After a few days, however, he left the village. His mother said he had gone to work in some town in Connecticut, where a good place was offered him, and, as she said it, she glanced reproachfully at Hannah. The blood settled heavily around the girl's heart, but she made no sign

and spoke no word. The dread she had felt, while her lover remained in the village, lest he should sometime persuade her to yield to his entreaty grew into a remembered bliss when the days and months trailed by, and she sickened at heart to know that he would try no more to persuade her. He did not come back to New Bridge, and after a not very long period Hannah heard that he was married. She was left to count the interminable days like sands upon the seashore. The years passed, till the memory of her love ceased to torture her, but she grew very still at heart, and felt as if she must walk softly evermore, because she trod upon a grave.

Patty was her chief comfort. She grew very fond of her after Hetty went away. She often reflected with horror that it might be that she had all this while wronged her mother with her suspicion. Then she would try to draw nearer to the widow's close-locked heart, and to atone, by some dumb service, for the fearful thing she had thought. A revulsion of feeling was sure to follow, and she grew more convinced, year by year, that her mother was guilty. Still, nothing occurred to waken her dread that, in some new access of temptation, Mrs. Dean might repeat the crime, and a wearing monotony of pain, anxiety, and fear that was not quite terror dominated over Hannah's life.

After a while a great revival swept through the village and roused Hannah's dormant spirit. She frequented prayer-meetings, and would fain have joined in the ecstasy of the converted. One evening, a wave of passionate emotion rushed over her soul and stirred it with feelings she had never known before.

Her submission to fate, though uncomplaining, had hitherto been dogged. Now, for an instant, she felt in accord even with the Power that had crushed her life, and given to her, an innocent woman, the burden of guilt to bear. Christ, too, had lived and died for sinners. It was permitted unto her to enter into that great sacrifice, to partake of that immeasurable and holy suffering. Hannah's heart was moved by the eternal truth underlying the dogmas of theology, — that, for some mysterious reason, the innocent must suffer with the guilty. She thrilled with consciousness of intimate union with Him whose death on Calvary has been a type of that mightier vicarious atonement in which the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, even to the third and fourth generation.

"It's like Christ," she said to herself, "somehow, it's like Christ to suffer because some one else has done wrong."

And Hannah might have fallen on her knees

and burst out into the wild, incoherent prayer in which her comrades indulged at these meetings, but that just then she turned her head and saw her mother on her knees in the vestry aisle. The old woman's eyes were closed, her bonnet fallen back. Her hands were clasped, her lips moved, and her body swayed slightly to and fro.

"She's a Christian," thought Hannah, and settled back in her seat.

All the next day, as Hannah walked back and forth between her looms, the machinery grumbled a steady undertone to her thoughts. This daughter, who believed her mother a murderess, had yet never attempted to decide whether the strange perversity and distortion of that mother's nature did or did not admit a genuine element of sincere, religious feeling. But if it did, what was religion, and of what good was it?

Hannah remembered her father, who had "died in his sins," as Mrs. Dean had been known pleasantly to describe her husband's condition of soul at the time of his death. Mr. Dean had never been converted. A death-bed conversion might have saved his soul. His wife's deed had prevented that possibility. What remained to him? Was it his fault that time had not been granted him?

Mrs. Dean might live to feel a genuine peni-

tence. Indeed, it was not clear to Hannah's mind, clouded as it was by a crude theology, that her mother would not be saved under any circumstances, since she called on Christ's great name. Nor did this daughter wish to imagine an eternal retribution awaiting even her guilty mother.

When Hannah went home that night, she found Deacon Dudley sitting by the kitchen fire. He smiled at her in a sickly way. Her mother set her thin old mouth firmly for a moment, and then said, "Hannah, I'm married to Mr. Dudley."

The girl stood still and stared.

"May be," broke in the old man, "you don't fancy the idea of a step-father, but I guess we'll get on fust-rate. The old woman and me got married to-day. It don't take much fuss to get anybody married in this State, and we didn't want no fuss. I've been mighty lonesome since my fust wife died, an' Mary, she's got her husband an' children to look arter, though I don't mean to say nothin' against Mary. She's a good woman, but I've always thought a sight of your ma. I do think, Hannah, she is the smartest woman in New Bridge; an' such a nice place as she's got, an' a smart girl like you in the mill, an' Patty" — But here some wiser instinct dawned upon him; he forbore to state

how much of a disadvantage he considered Patty in this matrimonial arrangement, and he continued, with a smile meant to express sentiment, "An' so you see, though Mary Pierce is a nice, good woman, an' plenty willing to have her old father stay with her, my feelin's seemed to draw me here."

"You 'd better shet up now about your feelin's," remarked his bride, amiably, "an' draw a pail of water for your tea."

The old man got up hurriedly, and taking the empty pail tottered out of the kitchen.

"I thought," said the mother, "as it would be handy to have a man about the house. I guess he 'll rather more than earn his board."

Hannah did not answer, but took off her bonnet and shawl, and sat down by the table.

In a moment Mr. Dudley was heard crying for help, and Hannah went hastily out to the well, where she found the old man struggling in vain with the bucket. It was evident that he was too feeble to draw the water. Hannah took his place and performed the task, while he stood by simpering out apologies.

At supper, Mr. Dudley pushed his plate over to his wife, and asked her to cut up the meat. Hannah glanced up at him, and saw that his hands were trembling violently. She looked over at her mother, and perceived a heavy frown

on the old woman's brow as she complied with her husband's request.

Hannah hurried off to the mill the next morning. She carried her dinner, and did not return till night. She looked haggard enough as she came into the kitchen, where Deacon Dudley sat smoking a pipe.

Her mind had been busy all day with harassing thoughts. She remembered that Mr. Dudley was reputed to own three or four hundred dollars. She could not doubt her mother's motive in marrying him. She had noticed the evening before that he was far more feeble than her mother could have supposed. He would, very likely, soon become a burden to his new wife. What would happen then, and what could she, Hannah, do? She was away from home twelve hours a day; what things might happen in twelve hours? The mill wheels ground out this question in her ears. The looms and all the flying machinery screeched it at her, as they kept up their diabolic dance before her eyes. Ought she to expose her mother? Was there really anything to expose?

She looked so sallow as she came into the kitchen that Mr. Dudley, lifting his head and removing his pipe, said, "Hannah, why don't you take some of them little white powders, them arsenic powders, the other girls take to

clear their skins out? You're mighty dark complected."

Hannah grew ghastly white, and went through the room and up-stairs without speaking.

At supper, Mr. Dudley shoved his plate over to Hannah, and asked her to cut up his meat. Mrs. Dudley contracted her brows, and after a little while remarked to her spouse that his appetite seemed good. He smiled as he answered that he generally relished his food.

Two weeks passed, and one day Mrs. Dudley announced her intention of visiting relatives in Troy, a town some twenty miles distant. Mr. Dudley and Patty were to go with her. Hannah, she said, might, while they were gone, take her meals at Mrs. Flint's. Hannah was amazed and troubled by this arrangement. Her mother had never made a visit before since she could remember.

"I think I'll go, too," said Hannah.

"No, you won't," replied Mrs. Dudley, shortly. "I can't have you foolin' away all your time. Me an' the old man'll go, and Patty, because her board to home would cost suthin; but you can stay an' 'arn your own livin'."

Hannah, nevertheless, resolved to go, and made her preparations accordingly. When the morning of the intended departure came, Mrs.

Dudley discovered her daughter's plans, and seemed so angry that a great terror fell upon the unhappy girl, and she dared not go, lest she should only precipitate some dreaded catastrophe. Perhaps she feared that she should draw down doom on her own head. At any rate, courage failed, and she watched the others depart to take the cars, making no further attempt to accompany them. Mr. Dudley turned after he had entered the road, and looking back to Hannah, who stood leaning on the gate, smiled and called out pleasantly that he wished she were going with them.

Hannah went back into the house and put on her shawl. She had come to a stern determination as those three figures had vanished from her sight. She would go instantly to Mrs. Pierce, Mr. Dudley's married daughter, confide to her the whole horrible story, and put the matter in her hands. She could go after her father, if she wished, and bring him home, and henceforth take care of him herself. Perhaps she could reason away Hannah's fears. Perhaps she would tell her that it was all a delusion. Of course, it must be delusion. What proof was it that Mr. Dean had died of poison that his daughters had found a bottle of arsenic under his chamber window? Bottles were common, and arsenic was used to kill rats, — and

was n't it used also for the complexion? Did n't Mr. Dudley say so? Hannah knew one or two persons who took it in small doses, as a stimulant. Mr. Dudley had a strangely white complexion. Hannah wondered if he used it. If he died, and people thought it was poison that killed him, of course it was because he took those powders. Hannah was sure he did. Oh, it had all been a delusion, a hideous dream, and she had dreamed it all her life. No, once she had not dreamed any such thing: that was when she rowed on the river with Tom Furness, and sang to him. She had not seen Tom for seven years. He was married. He had forgotten her. And but for this foolish, wicked dream of horror she might have been his wife all this time. Her mother would not do such a thing. Her mother was a good woman. Her mother belonged to the church. It was she, Hannah's self, who was very bad indeed to have thought of such a thing. She would go and tell Mrs. Pierce, and Mrs. Pierce would tell her that it could not be true. She was so bad, she must be a lost soul. She was sure she would go to hell when she died. She doubted whether hell would be any worse than this. She was n't certain but she was in hell even now. She would go to Mrs. Pierce, and find out where she was. But perhaps Mrs. Pierce

would believe it all. Perhaps her mother would be arrested and hanged, and she would have done it. She would be the murderess then. No, she would not go to Mrs. Pierce at all; she would go to the river, where she had been with Tom, and drown herself before any more misery came to her. But would that save Mr. Dudley? Save him — save him from what? She did n't know. Where was Mr. Dudley? Who was he? Why did it torture her so to think of Mr. Dudley? Oh, she remembered now. He was her mother's husband, and had gone away with her mother; and she must find Mrs. Pierce and tell her something. She had forgotten what she was to tell her, but she should recollect when she saw her, and it would save something. Where was Mrs. Pierce?

All the while Hannah went rushing round the nearly empty village streets, with her brain on fire. She could not find Mrs. Pierce's house. Everything looked strange to her. On she wandered, through the long morning. At last, a little before noon, guided by some blind instinct, she staggered into Mrs. Flint's yard and dropped by the door-step.

They found her there, and took her in. She moaned and muttered day after day, but they who heard her could distinguish nothing she said.

They wrote to Mrs. Dudley, and she came home with her husband and Patty. The old man was not well, and Hannah could not be moved; so Mrs. Dudley's time was divided between the two houses, which were a quarter of a mile apart. She grumbled a good deal at this, but matters grew no better, since the second night after their return Mr. Dudley became very ill. His wife then ceased her complaints. She seemed very devoted to him. She paid Mrs. Flint to take the whole care of Hannah, that she might give all her time and strength to her husband. He did not improve, however, and when, two days later, Hannah became conscious, Sue Flint told her that her step-father was dead. To Sue's astonishment, Hannah gave a shriek and went off again into delirium.

Mr. Dudley had lain in his grave perhaps two weeks, when strange rumors began to circulate through the village. Mrs. Pierce had somehow had suspicions of foul play awakened in her mind.

One day she called at Mrs. Flint's. Hannah had crawled down into the kitchen that morning, and sat there, silent and wretched. Mrs. Pierce, as she came in, eyed the girl sharply, and Hannah, heart-sick and feeling sorely stricken before Deacon Dudley's daughter,

dropped her eyes to the floor, and, after a moment's pause, rose, and walking slowly left the room. Mrs. Flint and Mrs. Pierce both felt her departure a relief, and their talk soon turned on the recent death.

"Will the old woman have his money?" asked the hostess.

"Not if I can help it," answered Mrs. Pierce, with a darkening brow; "I don't feel very well satisfied about my father."

"Was n't she kind to him?"

Mrs. Pierce was silent. Mrs. Flint continued, "She's a close-fisted woman. I presume she reckoned on his money when she married him."

"Yes, and when he died," said Mrs. Pierce, with startling emphasis. "I lie awake nights and think how he died."

"Why, but he was an old man; it's the course of natur' for the old to die."

"Some things are in the course of nature, and some are not," returned the visitor. "He was always worse after he'd taken medicine. She did n't want me there, I could see. But I saw enough to know that. There was sediment in his medicine. I saw it once" — here she checked herself. "I never felt my father a burden. He'd better have stayed with me."

"Perhaps," suggested Mrs. Flint, in vague

horror, of what she knew not, "the doctor didn't understand the case."

"I don't think he did," answered Mrs. Pierce.

"She is n't over-patient," went on Mrs. Flint, who shrank from perceiving any hidden meaning in her visitor's remarks, "with people who can't work their way. She's always hinting about my husband's being such a trial to me; and so he is, but I suppose the Lord sent him, and I must make the best of him."

Whereat, by careful manipulation, Mrs. Pierce drew out from Mrs. Flint the story of that strange remark of the widow Dean's about "stilling him down."

"I've often wondered what she meant. I suppose she thought opium or laudanum might be good for him," added the much-trying wife.

Mr. Dudley's daughter felt a cold chill run through her bones.

Meanwhile, that other daughter, the suspected widow's child, in the room above, was wearily packing her few things to go back to that home of horror and of sin. She felt by instinct that Mrs. Pierce's suspicion was aroused, and that the secret sin would surely be ferreted out. She was conscious of a dreary willingness that it should be so. She left the Flints that day, not weeping when she went,

but with a tearless misery in her eyes which they half understood, and which held Sue Flint firmly to her defense in the days that followed.

The village was soon alive with rumor. Hannah heard it at last, with set, dogged face. She found herself under a ban. The mill girls fell back when she entered the factory door, and waited below, while she climbed the winding stairs alone in the morning; and they crowded together in the entries at night, and left her to go down the dizzy flights, accompanied only by her own whirling fancies.

Whether Mrs. Dudley was herself aware of all that was being said, no mortal ever knew. She kept within doors, and went her accustomed rounds, only avoiding Hannah a little. Sue Flint, though friendly to Hannah, shared the universal suspicion of the widow, and now told that on the night, many years before, when Hetty had taken refuge at their house, after being turned out of the mill, the girl had sobbed out in her distress that she was afraid to go home, lest her mother should poison her.

Mr. Dudley's body was taken from the grave and examined. A deadly drug was found in the stomach. The afternoon that this discovery was announced, two police officers came from the neighboring town and arrested the widow.

The tidings of this event were borne to Hannah in the mill. She drew her shawl over her head and hurried home, where she found a crowd of men, women and children standing in the yard and in the road outside.

"Here comes Hannah!" cried a small boy, who was instantly silenced by some one.

"Are they going to take Hannah too?" another boy asked, as that unhappy creature reached the gate.

"Do you know," said some one else, "that to-morrow they mean to take up old Mr. Dean's body, and see what he died of?"

Hannah turned and faced the crowd. None who stood there ever forgot the dingy, labor-marked figure, the white, set face gleaming out from the folds of the dark shawl still flecked with cotton from the mill, or the cold, hard voice which spoke.

"I think," she said, "you'd better dig up all the graves in New Bridge, and see what your fathers died of."

It was a luckless speech, and it turned away from Hannah what little sympathy had already existed for her in the village. After that, people wondered whether she were not an accomplice in her mother's crime. Poor Hannah had, in her half-distracted brain, often wondered the same thing.

After speaking to the crowd, Hannah walked quickly into the house and found her mother perfectly composed, but lowering and dark of aspect. She was gathering together a few things to take with her. Patty lay sobbing on the floor. A constable stood at each door. Hannah assisted her mother, and when all was ready offered to go with her. Mrs. Dudley refused to allow her.

When the widow appeared in the yard, a neighbor, Deacon Burrill, stepped forward and spoke to her. "I'm very sorry," he said, "but I guess it'll all come out right, and we'll be glad to see you back again."

"For forty years," answered the widow, "I've been a member of the church here, and I'm as innocent as a babe unborn."

One half-grown girl gave a hysterical sob; otherwise, all was entirely quiet as Mrs. Dudley walked through the crowded yard. Patty had stayed in the house. Hannah followed her mother's tottering steps to the covered carriage, which waited in the road. Deacon Burrill helped the widow to enter. The constables got in after her.

The carriage drove away, and the deacon walked with Hannah back to the kitchen door. She would not let him enter with her, and when she had gone in herself he heard her lock the door behind her.

The men and women looked angrily at him as he came back among them, and some of the boys hissed. That night a mob of lads hung Deacon Burrill in effigy before his own gate.

The next day, Mr. Dean's body was disinterred, and fearful things were said, describing what was found. It was horrible to Hannah to know that curious hands had torn open that grave and rifled it of its hideous secret. She went at night to the grave-yard, and groveled for hours over the mound, which had been hastily piled again, and smoothed with her bare hands the carelessly heaped earth.

The trial came at last. Hannah and Patty sat, through it all, by their mother's side. Hetty did not come into the court room. Hannah firmly forbade her, and she was only too willing to escape the public ignominy of being seen there.

"Keep your wife away," said Hannah to Frank Cotter. "Keep away yourself. You can do no good there. People would only stare at Hetty, because she has been talked about in it, you know, that she was afraid of her mother when she married you. And when she read in the paper that mother was arrested, she cried aloud, 'They've found her out at last!' and fainted. That's told all over New Bridge. Is it true?"

"Yes," he said.

"She'd better have kept her thoughts and her faintings to herself," answered Hannah, shortly; then, softening a little, she added, "She was never good at keeping secrets, and this, to be sure, has been a thing to burn its way out of a closer mouth than hers. And may be it would have been better" — a shadow came over her face, already dark with care. She paused, and said no more.

The trial dragged its slow length out for three days, and was finished. The jury retired. Outcast and abhorred sat the prisoner and her children before the bar. This was the end of Hannah's long endeavor to prevent a repetition of her mother's crime, — to sit through a slow half hour, waiting for the verdict. She had kept the secret, and blood had been the penalty of her silence. Was she not also guilty of that blood? Should she not arise, confess her sin before men, and go with her mother to meet a common doom? The inertia of her New England blood held her still. Passionate emotion pressed on her like a weight. It did not move her like an impulse to action. She thought of Tom. He would understand now, and be glad she had sent him away.

The jury came back and rendered their verdict, "Guilty." Capital punishment had been

abolished in the State, and Mrs. Dudley was sentenced to imprisonment for life.

The evidence had been only circumstantial, but very strong against the widow. The attempt failed on the part of the defense to prove that Mr. Dudley killed himself by an accidental overdose of arsenic, which it was asserted he took habitually as a stimulant. The habit was not even conclusively shown to have existed. Hannah and Patty had both been put on the stand as witnesses, but, fortunately for them, neither had seen or known positively anything about the matter.

Hannah returned to her work in the mill. Patty did much of the housework, and what was beyond her limited powers Hannah performed at night, after her toil in the factory was over. Visitors had always been rare at this house. Now, no neighbor ever called. Sue Flint was still friendly when she happened to meet Hannah, but she never came to see the sisters. Hannah left off going to church, and this fact was unfavorably commented on. Patty ceased her crooning about the house, and when her work was done would sit motionless upon the door-sill through the long summer days. She always brightened when Hannah came home, but it was with only a faint illumination of her darkened spirit.

Every month the two sisters went to the state-prison and saw their mother. They carried her food in such quantities that, in all the years that she remained there, she was very little dependent on the prison fare. The warden allowed the old woman some privileges on account of her age. She was never obliged to wear the prison dress, and her daughters always clothed her. They even did her washing, and kept her supplied with white, freshly "done up" caps. At the intercession of some persons of influence, whom Hannah interested in the case, Mrs. Dudley was permitted to have a rocking-chair in her cell. The girls wanted to take her a feather-bed, but this was considered too great a luxury, and she was not allowed to have it. She never worked with the rest of the female prisoners, but was given yarn to knit, in her own cell, into stockings for the other convicts. One of her jailers said she showed her passion for acquisition by stealing and secreting in her bed great bunches of this yarn. She always maintained that she was innocent. Sometimes, even now, Hannah half believed that she was so.

The church at New Bridge dropped Mrs. Dudley's name from the roll of its membership. The charge of her soul's salvation thenceforth devolved on the state-prison chaplain and chance

visitors or preachers at the jail. But Hannah never delegated to any other individual the care of her mother's person. The old woman always received her daughters, when they visited her, with a certain dry dignity, such as she seemed to consider befitting her injured innocence. She might be in a prison cell, but she never forgot that she was a persecuted martyr, and, in a squalid sort of fashion, she was a stately one.

One evening, in the September after Mrs. Dudley's trial, Patty left the house after supper, for a stroll across the meadows and down to the river, one of whose many curves brought it back of their house. Hannah sat quite idle, in the fast-falling twilight. The kitchen door stood open before her. The long, faint light streamed in and fell about her. She wore her dark factory gown. Her hair, generally twisted tight from her face, was this night pushed loosely back. Her hands lay clasped in her lap. Not beautiful she looked, yet surely not unlovely, for the stern mouth was softened, and the hard eyes were almost dreamy.

Suddenly she became aware that the room was darkened, and, looking up, she saw that a man stood in the door-way and shut out the light.

A moment she stared bewildered, and then she saw that he held in his arms a little child.

A moment more, and she knew that Tom Furness stood before her. She did not move, only sat and gazed.

The man's lips trembled, and some strange emotion flickered over his face as he saw this silent woman who sat in his Hannah's place. Then he slowly walked across the room, and laid the sleeping child in her lap. She looked at it, and she looked at him wildly, and then she gathered the little one close to her heart.

Tom leaned over her and put his hand on her shoulder, and felt her tremble under his touch.

"Hannah," he said at length, "I have guessed it all now, and know why you sent me away; but you should have told me, and I would have stood by you. I was mad and proud, and in my madness and pride I married — a woman who drank herself to death. My boy is a sickly little fellow, and I've brought him in my arms all the way, to ask you to take him and take care of him."

A sound of sobbing filled the dreary old kitchen. All the sorrow and remorse and doubt and fear of seven years was told; but after the storm came quiet and the promise of peaceful days.

New Bridge gossip busied itself greatly over the marriage of Tom Furness to Hannah Dean. People wondered that he dared marry into a

family which had proved so fatal to husbands, but of course, some fragments of the true story were bruited about, and helped to restore a kindly feeling towards Hannah among her neighbors. They saw also how motherly she was with Tom's child, and how well cared for the boy was, and perceiving these things, New Bridge grew friendly again, and began to believe in Hannah.

She left the mill and entered upon a quiet household life. She missed, at first, the ceaseless whirl of the machinery. It was so still at home, she said, she could not think; but she soon came to feel this stillness, broken only by Patty's croon, which sounded again, and by the sweet laugh of Tom's child, to be a blessed thing.

Tom and his wife were naturally very ordinary people, and had they married in their first youth would undoubtedly have settled into a most humdrum life. But they had both lived through sad and dark experiences, which made every commonplace incident and detail of their married days an inexpressible relief and pleasure, and thus they had come to know the deeper meaning of trifles.

He never shirked his part in her sad ministry to her mother, but she would never let him go with her and Patty to the prison. They con-

tinued their visits there, but they always went alone. Neither Tom nor Tom's boy would Hannah permit to be seen with them on these occasions, when all who saw them would remember their disgrace.

Winter and summer wore away, and still Mrs. Dudley sat in her white-walled cell, the eternal knitting in her hand, the small, bright eyes ever fixed upon the door; ten years were told, and never a confession of guilt was drawn from her.

There was one lady who visited the prison who took a great interest in Mrs. Dudley, and believed her to be innocent; and feeling, also, that a prison cell was a dreary abode for a woman nearly eighty years old, she made many efforts, and at last obtained a pardon for her. Those persons who had testified against Mrs. Dudley at the trial at first opposed her return to New Bridge. They said they feared her revenge, and all the old suspicion that had been lulled so long woke again, and people looked coldly as ever on Tom Furness and his wife. It was a bitter time for those two. They sent Robert away on a visit, that he, at least, might be shielded from all this evil speaking.

"Oh, Tom," cried Hannah once, "I ought never to have married you, to bring this on you."

He smiled sadly, yet tenderly. "It is hard, Hannah, but we'll weather it, and if they get the old woman pardoned we'll take her and go West, where nobody will ever know. It's clear in my mind that it will do no harm for her, old as she is, to come out of jail. And we'll never think of the past. We'll think instead that her mind has been sick all her life, and that's how she came to be as she is. Indeed, I don't think she was born with a well soul."

So Mrs. Dudley, in her trembling old age, came back to the home she had polluted, and which grew sad again when she entered it. Patty shrank a little from this dark, helpless old woman. She had entirely forgotten that her mother had ever been there before, having now for several years had no ideas connected with her except the prison associations, and she was bewildered to see her in the house. Robert stayed all this while at Frank and Hetty Cotter's busy and happy among their numerous brood.

"If mother does not live very long," said Hannah, "Robert shall never come home while she is here. He shall never see her."

It seemed at first as if the old woman would die very soon, but under the thoughtful care they gave her she rallied a little, and was some-

times seen at the front windows, looking out at the street, or on the other side of the house, staring over the wide, lovely meadows that stretched down to the peaceful water. Did she know that the passers-by still shuddered when they saw her dark old face through the window-pane? Did she care for the familiar fields and the changing yet unchanged sky circling above them? Hannah cared for them all. And how the birds did sing and the violets and saxifrage, the anemones and "columbine" did bloom that spring. Hannah felt as if all these beautiful objects were trying to comfort her, and give peace to her soul, so that her strength might endure to the end. She had some rabbits, and her inarticulate nature found great solace in fondling the round, soft, white creatures. Tom often sat on a bench under an old apple tree and watched her caress her little pets.

"Hannah," said he, once, "when you was a girl, and did n't know no trouble, you was old and prim in your ways, but now as you 've a clear right to be old and prim, you act more 'n more like a child."

She looked up at him with startled eyes.

"I ain't objecting to it," he added in response to something in her gaze.

Then the thought that struggled uncertainly within her found, for a single time, words in which to utter itself.

"I never got religion," she said, "but it seems to me as if God sent me messages by these pretty things out-doors, telling me as He had forgave me, and telling me too not to worry so much."

Mrs. Dudley had been at home a fortnight, when a longing woke within her to go again to the village church where she had once been a constant attendant. She was shocked because Tom and Hannah did not go to church, and querulously reproved them.

"We will go with you," answered Hannah, with a patient smile.

"If you went to church regular," said Mrs. Dudley, "may be the Lord would give you freedom from the bondage of sin, like as He 's given it to me."

As she spoke, Tom remembered the superstitious belief of some religious fanatics, that they were so intimately associated by grace with God's grace that they could do no wrong, and he wondered whether Mrs. Dudley were not under the influence of this idea. Perhaps she had believed that whatever annoyed her annoyed God also, and it was lawful for her to put it away. Was this the explanation of her constant assertion of innocence?

Tom was too proud just then to borrow a horse and carriage of any of the neighbors, to

carry to church the feeble old convict. So when Sunday came, he took a small wagon, which he had obtained somewhere, set an arm-chair in it, and placed therein the old woman. Hannah and Patty walked along the sidewalk; Tom went between the shafts and drew the wagon himself.

Through the Sunday quiet of the village street they passed, under the arching elms and the straight, fair maples, and they paused at length before the old white church. Silently Tom lifted Mrs. Dudley out, and Hannah supported her up the steps. Their faces were set and pale, but hers was flushed, and it trembled a little with the helpless quiver of old age. They led her in to the seat to which she had formerly been accustomed, and they sat down by her.

She stared about her a moment, then fixed her eyes on the minister, and the old peculiar Sunday look which Hannah had known from childhood stole over her face.

She rigidly maintained this appearance of devotion to the end of the service. God only knows what were the thoughts of any one of that strange family group. He knows also whether the sort of pious feeling which Mrs. Dudley manifested from her earliest to her latest days was purely assumed, or whether it

arose from some real germ of good in her ill-born and sin-distorted soul.

Through the long morning service, with the sweet sounds of nature stealing in through the open windows, Mrs. Dudley kept her place. She sat among her life-long neighbors, and they gazed on her fearfully. The mark of Cain was on her brow, but her children faithfully surrounded her, and it may be God had not quite forsaken her.

The next day one of the church members met Tom Furness, and told him, with a not unnatural disgust, that great dissatisfaction was felt at Mrs. Dudley's appearance in the house of God. It disturbed the congregation, and it must not happen again.

A savage light gleamed for an instant in Tom's eyes, then he spoke quietly: "Very well, I don't think much of your religion, but I thought the particular boast of your church was that it preached a gospel fit for sinners and powerful to save them."

So the quaint procession never reappeared in the streets of New Bridge, and the sinner came no more to the house of penitence and prayer.

A little longer Mrs. Dudley lingered on the threshold of the grave. A few more sunny days and long, still evenings remained for her; for Hannah and her husband yet a little more patience and silent pain, and then the end came.

No confession passed Mrs. Dudley's lips. She sank into a sort of stupor, and died quietly at last. They were all there: Frank and Hetty Cotter, Tom, Hannah, and Patty. When the wretched life was fairly gone, Tom drew a long, free breath, and lifted his head like a man who throws down a great burden. Each person save Hannah, whose head was bowed in her hands, turned and looked strangely at the others. Death had set the living free, and a great wonder, a great sorrow, and a great exultation were all written for a moment in those blanched faces. No one spoke till Tom crossed over and laid his hand on Hannah's shoulder. "Dear," said he, "it is over now. We will send for Robert, and take Patty, and move somewhere, far from here."

LUKE GARDINER'S LOVE.

EDEN's step-father, Johnny Ronian, did not favor her "keeping company" with Luke Gardiner, so he made up a story out of a quarrel he had had with the young man, and one morning, when she was on her way to the mill, he told her that young Gardiner said he would n't have anything to do with her, even if her family asked him.

Poor little Eden believed the lie and was very angry and very much hurt. She was glad to be released from her task, when something about the machinery needed repairing in the course of the forenoon, and to escape into a long gallery formed by a bridge in the air, connecting two of the mill buildings. She put her aching head out of a little window. Out-door sounds, musical and spring-like, came to her ears. She could see on the other side of the merrily flowing river the little house where Luke Gardiner lived. It had been his home when he was a

child, and he and she had played together round the door-step of unhewn stone, and had fished and waded in the shallow waters near by, where the pickerel-weed grew. Luke had kissed her when he and his mother had said good-bye and moved away from Blackbird Hollow. She remembered the kiss now, with a smile and a pang. During Luke's absence he had learned to be a machinist, and on his return, at the last Christmas time, he had established his mother again in the old cottage home. The intimacy with Eden had been renewed, and had soon taken upon itself a character of fitful tenderness, much interfered with by the step-father's violent opposition and the girl's own light-headed tendency to flirt with other men.

Ronian had several reasons for disliking the young man, chief among which was the fact that although English by blood, Luke, who was of American birth, consorted with the Americans. It was soon after the Know-Nothing times, and Ronian hated the Yankees as cordially as he supposed they hated his race. Besides, neither he nor the girl's mother wanted her to marry any one, since, if she did, they could no longer control her wages.

As Eden lingered at the window, some one came behind and lightly kissed her cheek. The offender, an overseer named Joe Glancy, had

some ado to appease her, but he finally succeeded in making her laugh.

"That 's right," he said then. "And now we 're friendly, look here, I saw these t' other day, an' thinking how awful pretty you 'd look in 'em, I bought 'em."

He showed her a pair of tinsel ear-rings, among the first manufactured of the sort of jewelry destined to captivate the fancy of her class.

"Oh-h," she sighed, "they 're just like Kate McCannah's! No, they 're prettier! But I can't take 'em. Thank you just the same."

"Think how becomin' they 'd be," he urged. "The boys would all be runnin' after you."

"The boys run after me now," she said, with a laugh.

"You 're afraid of what Luke Gardiner 'd say. It's along of him. Ain't you ashamed!"

This touched the sore spot in her little heart. "It ain't along of him," she cried. "An' I 'll take 'em to prove it, Mr. Glancy."

There was a greedy gloat in his eyes as she fastened on the ornaments, tossed her head and marched away without another word.

Eden found her mother crying when she went home that night. They lived up-stairs in what was called the Stone house, a building which stood at one end of the bridge across the river. Luke's cottage was on the opposite bank.

Mrs. Ronian sat in dirt and despair. Three small children meanwhile played happily in some washtubs on the floor, and a twelve-year-old girl sewed by the window.

"Oh," sobbed the woman, "I 'm a-feared of my life. He come in just now, a bit early from his work, an' he struck Flit, an' I run in atween, an' he grabbed me by t'e t'roat. He wur sober, too. I'd not ha' minded it if he 'd been drunk. Of course a man can't take careful note o' what he does when he's been drinking. But he knowed what he done, an' he swore he'd send Flit to the poor-'us."

Here the child, who had been crying, came and laid a long thin hand on Eden's arm, and looked up with large, glazy eyes.

"Please give me a cent," she said; "just one."

"Me!" laughed the elder girl. "My money goes for rent and coal."

"If I asked Uncle John," said the child, "to give my mother the rent, would he?"

"No, Flit, I guess not," said Eden.

"Uncle John" was the name by which the Quaker mill-owner, Mr. Comstock, was called by his work-people.

Eden went to the closet to get herself something to eat. The mother sighed, and hustled the children out of the washtubs. Flit gave a

bubbling, uncanny laugh, as she turned to the open window. The soft, western breeze blew her short, reddish hair over her forehead. She took a small blue shawl from a chair, and with a swift, gliding step, eluding her sister's grasp, as Eden came from the closet, darted past the others, and fled from the room.

"There," groaned Mrs. Ronian, "she's gone, an' night comin' on, an' oh, there's plenty of harm as can happen to a girl like her, — an' she's that crazy after money, she'd go anywhere with any one as offered her ten cents."

Eden hastened after the child. Some one told her Flit had crossed the river, and she followed, thinking that she saw a sprite-like form pass Luke's house. She went thither and pushed open the door. Luke, sitting within, started to see that figure standing on his threshold, the sunset color all about it. His mother, a small, fine-faced old Englishwoman, looked up from the table, on which she leaned her elbows.

"Why, Eden, is it you? I'm truly glad to see you."

"You're kind to say that," answered Eden, with drooping eyes. "An' how are you?"

"Oh, just coomfortable now; naething to groomble at," said Mrs. Gardiner, cheerily.

"Your health is better than it was?"

"Ah, that changes like all else ; naething to groomble at. Coom in."

"No," said Eden, still speaking rather softly. "I cannot stop now. I'm lookin' for Flit, an' I saw her here as I come over the bridge."

"I saw summun a spyin' in at the window, a momunt gone," said Mrs. Gardiner, "but the face just vanished like the lady I seen in my dream last night."

Eden turned away, and Luke followed.

"I'd liefer go alone," she said. \

"But I'd liefer go with you."

She was angry with him for what she thought he had said about her ; but she could not help being glad to walk beside him. So they went on together through the deepening twilight. Now and then they thought they saw Flit gliding round some corner, or darting into some shadow. They stopped at one or two houses to inquire. They glanced into the grocery, and fearfully peered into rumshops.

"Let's go to the church," said Eden ; "she's so religious she may be there."

In Mr. Comstock's sitting-room several persons sat around a table which supported two oil lamps. A drugget crumb-cloth of an ugly pattern covered part of the ingrain carpet on the floor. A cupboard of shelves, shut into the wall by a glass door, served as a bookcase. Here

stood a long row of leather-bound volumes, lettered, "Piety Promoted." Beside them was the Book of Discipline of the Society of Friends. On the shelf below might be found Mrs. Chapon's "Letters," indorsed on the fly-leaf with a recommendation in stilted phrases, written by Mrs. Comstock's father. There were other old books, and two new ones, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and "The Wide, Wide World."

There were no pictures on the buff walls of this room, but in the unlighted parlors beyond hung an engraving of Correggio's Holy Night, and some portraits, in oval gilt frames, of Wm. Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and Theodore Parker.

Plenty of children inhabited this house, but they were all in bed since sunset, according to the family custom, at once healthful for the youngsters and pleasant to the elders.

Mr. Comstock was reading the "Liberator." He held the paper so that his wife could see plainly the words "A Covenant with Death, An Agreement" — the rest was out of sight. Mrs. Comstock was sewing. She wore a gown of semi-religious fashion, which had been stripped of the sweet quaintness of the Quaker style, and had not gained any worldly grace instead thereof. She had a serious face and abstracted eyes. Near her sat Miss Firth, the

governess who had imported into the family a few ideas from Concord. Hers was an intelligent countenance with pudgy features. She was reading intently in Thoreau's "Walden." Everybody was absorbed, not even noticing the swift sliding of small bare feet upon the carpet, till a hand touched Mr. Comstock's shoulder, and a voice said: —

"Uncle John, won't you give my mother the rent of her house, and won't you give me ten cents?"

They all started to see a young girl standing among them, a girl with pale, parted lips, a dead white face, and strange, pathetic eyes.

"Please give me ten cents," she continued to beg. "My mother gives all her money to the Mission Fathers, so 's they will cure me, an' I'll not be sick any more. An' please tell me what makes thè Yankee people hate the Irish?"

"Who is she?" cried Mrs. Comstock. The girl from the kitchen came in to identify her. "It's crazy Flit," she said. "She must ha' come in the woodshed, an' right past me. Nobody never sees her till she's most in their mouths. She's so still. Miss Ingham found her up-stairs in her spare room t' other day, a layin' on her company bed."

Flit crouched down behind Mr. Comstock's chair, wailing, "Ah, don't send me away. I only want one cent, — just one cent."

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He handed her a coin. She sprang like a panther to take it, and cried, "Please give me another! I want one so bad."

At that moment the door-bell rang clearly, and Eden was soon ushered into the room. "Is my little sister here?" asked she.

Flit sprang to her, laughed joyfully, and grasped her hand.

"Some children," explained Eden, "told me they thought they see her come in here."

Mrs. Comstock took the sisters to the door, where Luke stood waiting, and expressed a kindly hope that Flit might not be punished for her escapade. She went back with a thoughtful brow. Miss Firth was saying, "I suppose perfect liberty of action is undoubtedly best for the development of children with peculiar idiosyncrasies."

Mrs. Comstock slowly folded up her work for the night, considering this proposition, while uncle John's benignant face grew serious, as he said that the introduction of foreigners among the operatives had quite changed the conditions of life in New England, and seemed likely to involve serious consequences.

Luke left the girls at their outside door. As they mounted the stairs, they were terrified by the noises that came from above, but they went on, and up, to their mother's kitchen. Ronian

stood in the middle of the floor, in a drunken fury. He seized Flit, and struck her heavy blows, accusing her of having stolen money from him. She rushed behind Eden, and that attracted his attention to her. Her sun-bonnet had fallen back, and he saw her ear-rings. He caught hold of them savagely.

"Where did you get them?" he demanded. "You stole the money yourself, and bought 'em."

The mother rushed forward, but he pushed the girl towards the door, with his hands and feet, raging and swearing. She stumbled and staggered a moment before him, then sprang erect like a flame, took Flit's hand, and fled with her down into the dark street.

Mrs. Ronian tried to follow, but her husband held her back. "Go to bed," he said; "let the brats have a taste of the night air to cool 'em off."

Hand in hand the sisters ran, till they nearly knocked against a girl who had just bounced down an out-door stair-case leading from the second story of one of the factory tenement houses.

"Hollo," said this girl roughly; "what's up?"

"O Katy," gasped Eden, and then told their story. Kate McCannah laughed. "Bah," said

she, "let him alone. He's full of rum. Come home with me."

Glad of any shelter, the outcasts climbed the stairs with the girl. In the kitchen above, they found Kate's sisters, Rosa and lame Lucy, and their father. Kindly greetings were exchanged, and Lucy hobbled about and got everybody tea in bowls and cracked cups. Afterwards the girls went up to the attic. It was a large unfinished garret, in the middle of which stood a low bedstead. A couple of calico quilts were thrown in a heap in one corner of the room. Some dresses dangled from nails stuck in the rafters. A broken chair and two boxes completed the furnishing of the room.

Kate sat down on the bed and kicked her heels together.

"Three in a bed is a tight fit," she said. "How about five? I'll lie across the foot."

Flit curled herself up among the quilts on the floor. "I'm all right here," she said; "you others can take the bed."

She lay motionless, while the girls told their beads. "Say your prayers, Flit," urged Eden, but the child did not move. "By and by," she said, and Eden went sleepily to her small portion of the uneven couch. When all was quiet, Flit stole to the window. The moon was rising. She drew from her breast a rosary and

sank on her knees in the white light which shone on her drooped eyelids. She prayed aloud that the saints would make her well, — would just make her well! As she knelt her terrible disease overcame her, and she fell forward unconscious. The noise roused Eden, who got up to see to her.

The next noon, as Eden and the McCannah girls entered the mill-yard, Luke came up to them. He recognized at once the ear-rings that Eden wore. He had seen Glancy buy them. He caught hold of her arm. A crowd of the mill people surged about them, and hid the sudden gesture. She freed herself and fled from him into the building. He followed and found her alone on the factory stairs.

"Why do you wear Joe Glancy's ear-rings?" he cried.

"What is it to you, what I wear? I have n't forgot what you said about not keepin' company with me."

"It is n't that," persisted Luke, "but people are talking about you; your father an' everybody. They say you 've gone to McCannah's along o' Glancy. It 's enough to ruin a girl."

She threw her hands out blindly, and as Joe Glancy came up the stairs, greeted him as though he were a friend who could protect

her from Gardiner's look and word. The overseer lightly linked his arm in hers, and rushed her up the remaining steps, while the baffled young machinist turned down, with a face grown grey and stern.

So things grew worse between these two, Luke and Eden, for when he went home that night, he heard more gossip. "Flit was bad," said his mother, "an' Eden had took 'er part, an' both had been turned out of doors in the night. An' Ronian was goin' to send an officer after the girls that day, but the rheumatics got 'im, an' 'e was in bed, an' the mother would not stir to get the officer. An' Eden 'ad said everywhere, as she would n't go home."

The evening was cloudy, and darkness settled early over the village and over the swampy shallows of the mill-pond, where the opal colors of the sunset were wont to lie reflected for long hours between lily-pads and pickerel-weed.

Flit meanwhile made her escape from Lucy's careless guardianship, and roamed at will about the darkening streets. She found Luke on the bridge, gloomily staring into the black, slippery flood. She slid up to him and touched his arm. He turned, saying bluntly, for the child's noiseless ways made him nervous,

"What do you want now?"

She locked her hands around his arm, and

looked up in his face. "Dear Luke," she said, "I love you. But, O Luke, I wish you 'd give me some money."

"Why don't you go home?" asked he.

"He'd beat me," said she. "Oh, he'd beat me. I don't think my mother would, but he would. Next week Eden says she'll take me to Woonsocket, an' I 'n' her 'll live there together."

"That won't do," muttered the young man. He took the child's hand. "Come, go back with me an' stay with Eden to-night."

When they were near McCannah's house, Flit pulled Luke out of the road.

"Come with me," she pleaded; "do, dear Luke." He went with her into the shadow of a little bluff behind the house. The pines of the original forest crowned the summit, and below, some laurel bushes shaded the spot where the child paused.

"I want to say my prayers here," she said, "they're so noisy in there."

Kneeling, she glanced up to the clouded sky. It was so dark he could not well see the little pale face with the strange, perfectly shaped eyes; but it seemed to him he saw it, as she went on.

"An' do you know what I will pray? It's what I'm wishin' all the time, that I was in

heaven, Luke, where I'd never be sick any more."

When her prayers were done he led her to the house; then he went back and hid among the laurel bushes. He had seen a shadow cross one of the upper windows, and had recognized Glancy's figure.

Some time before this, Eden came back from an errand.

"Where 's Flit?" was her first question.

"Gone to bed," said Lucy, who was placidly sewing and had not noticed the girl's absence. McCannah tilted his chair, smoked his pipe, and opened and shut his eyes at intervals. Eden tossed down her bonnet, and turned round glowing to meet Kate and Rosa, who came in with Joe Glancy, and they all rushed wildly into the other room. Joe caught Kate around the waist. She pushed him off, and he stumbled and pretended to fall. Two other girls burst in and joined in making a hubbub. The old man got up from his chair and walked in from the kitchen.

"If you break the lamp you shan't have another!" he growled.

"All right," said Joe; "I love to set in the dark."

McCannah started to take away the lamp at once, as an economical precaution; but Lucy laid a hand on his arm, —

“Don’t, father; they do act so rough in the dark, an’ you know the super’ has warned us from bein’ so noisy nights.”

He yielded, and she placed the light carefully on the mantel shelf beside a highly colored plaster image of the Virgin. Then she brought some gingerbread, and Joe produced some liquor in a bottle. Eden sat a little apart, and would not drink, in spite of much boisterous urging.

“Well,” said Joe, “I guess you ’ll dance.”

He took out a fiddle, and as he played the girls revolved before him till he felt as if he owned them all. Lucy alone stood still, looking on wistfully. After a while Kate began to tease Eden to do for them a clog dance, the performance of which was an unfeminine accomplishment in which the little maiden excelled. She laughed and refused, till at last, when Joe drew his bow across the strings, she began to move her feet. Her eyes burned and her cheeks grew red. The excitement which had been in her veins all day seemed to find relief in motion. Old McCannah stood in the doorway and clapped his hands. As the minutes went on, and still she danced, she grew very pale. At a sign from Joe, Kate poured some liquor into a tumbler and handed it to her. Eden took the glass and held it above her head, without ceasing her movements.

"Drink!" cried Joe, "or we'll think you've gone over to the Yankee temp'rance folks, like Luke Gardiner."

She seemed to hear the name as if it were shouted across rushing waters; then she drained the glass, tossed it to Joe, and threw herself into a chair, and leaned back a moment while the red blood rose again to her cheeks, and a dizzy smile came to her lips.

Luke waited outside, till the house door opened and several figures rushed down the stairs.

Kate and Lucy took Eden between them and walked her swiftly forward. Luke followed and perceived her condition. Unused to liquor, that one glass had been sufficient to upset her; but Joe had forced her to drink another, and now she did not know where she went, or what she did or said. Joe led the way, and when they came to the door of a little grog-shop, he stopped and urged them to come in. Kate was quite ready, but Lucy hung back.

"You go home, Joe," she said, "an' she'll be all right soon. It 'uld be a shame to get her in there."

"Oh, you," he growled; "you talk." Then he stooped and whispered in her ear. She drew her breath shudderingly, twisted her fingers, and said:—

"All right; let's go in."

Joe caught hold of Eden and pulled her forward; but Luke rushed upon him from behind the girls, knocked him down and stood over him like a rough St. George.

Lucy gave a little cry, the others screamed, then giggled. Some men came out of the saloon.

"For God's sake," said Gardiner, "take that girl home to her mother."

For a moment no one spoke; then Lucy said, "No, if she went home now they'd beat her to death; but I promise you, Luke, she shall stay safe with me all night."

Glancy was slowly recovering from the stupor engendered by his fall, and struggled under Luke's feet and fists. The girls slipped away. Then Gardiner defied the whole crowd of men, let Joe go, and backed off till he had made sure that he would not be pursued, when he turned and ran after Eden and her companions. At the foot of the stair-case leading to the McCannah tenement, he took Lucy by the shoulders and looked threateningly down through the darkness into her eyes.

"Luke," said she, "don't be too hard on Eden. Don't fret her and make her mad. It's comfortin' that a girl needs sometimes to make her good."

All night long Gardiner sat on the steps and guarded the approach to the rooms above. When the dawn reddened over the factory roofs, he rose and staggered to the river bank, threw himself on the ground and stared into the stream.

"If I was God," he said aloud, "I'd be — ashamed to let a girl like that get — spoiled. If He's a good God, I should think He'd do something. I would if I was Him."

He threw some pebbles in the water. They broke the shining surface into glancing, circling ripples. He seemed to see Eden's face floating dead on the swift current. He raised his eyes to the pallid heavens, and said, "If you won't save her, God, I will."

It showed that Eden was somewhat demoralized, that she made no effort to rise that morning and go to her work. Rosa and Kate McCannah departed, leaving her asleep, and Lucy locked Flit into the kitchen while she went out on an errand. The child, not liking to be imprisoned, dropped through the window on to the stair-case, and walked off with head erect. Her mother saw her pass the Stone house, and leaned out of the casement to call.

"Flit, Flit, come home! We've found the money, an' yer father won't beat you."

Flit raised her long eyelashes. "I'll come by and by. I'm goin' to church now;" and

without delay she sped across the bridge. The mother would fain have followed, but Ronian called to her from his bed, and kept her waiting on him.

When, at last, Eden awoke and remembered clearly what had happened on the previous evening, she buried her golden head in the tumbled bedclothes, and wished she was dead. Her own father had been a man superior to her mother, and Eden's childhood had been spent in better surroundings than those of later years. She had never before sunk to the level of her present companions. Shame overwhelmed her. She had promised Joe that she would go with him this next night to a dance in a neighboring town. A sudden fear seized her as she thought of it. Young as she was, she was not so ignorant as not to know the danger in which she stood. She moaned and muttered to herself. "Oh, oh; what difference can anything make after what Luke saw last night! I can't be good an' happy no more. I *won't* be good an' miserable. I'll go with Joe — an' dance. Oh, Luke, — if only Luke had n't got mad with me. If he only had n't seen me." Then she threw up her arms and laughed. "I guess the devil is after me. I guess he's got me already."

She sprang to the floor, combed her yellow hair, looked in the dingy little glass, and ex-

ulted over her own beauty. She arranged her dress and ran down stairs, singing at the top of her voice : —

“ Nelly was a lady,
Last night she died.
Toll, toll the bell, for lovely Nell,
My dark Virginia bride.”

As she entered the kitchen, Lucy looked up from the stove to say, “ Flit ’s got away again.”

“ Oh,” cried Eden, “ I ’m afraid Ronian ’ill get hold of her. I must go after her. Dear, how hot the sun is ! ”

She went out, and when she reached the foot of the staircase, Luke Gardiner flung himself down from the pine-covered bluff and stood before.

“ I ’ve been waitin’ for you,” he said ; “ I got off work to-day, on purpose to see you. Come over by the trench an’ let me talk with you.”

She hesitated, then said, “ Well, you go first, I ’ll follow.”

A few minutes later, Luke sat waiting on a big stone close to the water’s edge. Wide open meadows stretched behind him, and at a little distance some fine oaks shaded the river into which the trench emptied. The young man’s temper was changed since morning. He no longer felt defiant, but prayerful, — praying God to help him save the girl he loved, — for he did

love her still, and when at last he saw the little figure coming towards him, through the warm sunlight, the sad, pale face looked so lovely to him, that his heart yearned to meet her.

"There 's the same alder bush," he said looking up, "that was here when we was little children. Do you mind how we had a play that the fairies danced in its branches at night? And look at that bird's nest. Do you want it?"

He spoke softly, as if no trouble weighed on the mind of either. Some horrible weight seemed to roll off Eden's brain, and she felt old memories rise in her heart, and restore there a sense of childish innocence.

"Not unless it 's empty," she said, leaning over the water to look into the little swinging cradle. He knelt beside her and reached for the nest, and when he put it in her fingers, he looked straight in her eyes. She sank on the grass, and for a moment nothing outside themselves seemed nearer to them than the sky. Then he spoke.

"Can't I help you somehow? When you was a little girl an' fell down, I picked you up. It hurt me more 'n it hurt you. I feel just the same now. You 're in trouble, — you 're in the way of more trouble. You must know it

is n't a good thing for you to be at McCannah's house."

"Yes, Luke, I know," she said sobbing, "but Ronian drove us out in the night, an' we had to go somewheres, — an' Kate was good to us."

"Yes," said he eagerly, "she is kind, but can't you go somewheres else now? I don't speak for myself, dear, tho' I love you so much, but I know about Joe Glancy and Lucy, an' why he's so thick with all them girls. It ain't a fit place for you. Say, my mother will take you to a cousin of hers in Fall River, you 'n' Flit, if you can't go home."

She flung herself from him with a low cry, and hid her face in the grass. He leaned over her fallen head, till she raised at last her wet eyes, and whispered, "O Luke, how good you are! O Luke, is that what goodness is like? I thought everybody was bad an' it did not matter much about me."

"Will you go?" he asked.

"I'll do anything you say," she murmured, all broken in tears.

"You will go to my mother's?" asked Luke, trembling lest she were not persuaded after all; and Eden bowed the assent she could not speak, rose hurriedly, smoothed her disordered dress, and started toward the village. She did not want to reveal her emotion more fully, and

when he followed and reached her side, she did not speak. They walked in silence through the fields, and down the road to the river. They passed the Stone house and stepped on to the bridge. The stream was walled in on both sides, the wall extending from the bridge to the dam. On the pile of stone-work which Luke and Eden were facing stood a child's figure.

"It's Flit," cried Eden.

As she spoke, the child knelt, and they plainly saw her raise her hands as if praying. They ran forward, urged by a feeling of sudden terror, and as they ran, Eden screamed, for after kneeling a moment, Flit fell forward into the water.

Immediate access to the wall was cut off from the street, and to reach the place after crossing the river, it was necessary for Luke and Eden to make a short *détour* through the factory yard. Before they arrived at the spot, a crowd of people had rushed from the mill, and were gathered on the narrow strips of earth and masonry which divided the trench from the river. Luke sprang on the wall, where Flit had stood, flung off his shoes and coat, tied a rope, which Joe Glancy brought him, around his waist, and jumped into the flood. The water stood barely an inch above the mill-dam, and while such a plunge required nerve, it in-

volved no danger. Yet Luke found himself overcome by an unaccustomed horror, as he groped through the deep blackness, his eyes wide open, his arms stretched before him, his fingers clutching at objects on the stony bottom, with frantic haste feeling for little Flit's body. He rose with empty hands to the surface. As he lifted his pale face above the current, he heard Eden cry aloud. He swam towards the bridge, and was drawn up on to the ground. For a brief space of time, he lay still, panting hard, and then, knitting his brows, he stood up, again knotted the rope about him, walked back to the place from which he had before jumped, and went in again.

When he next appeared above the slow, slippery current, he brought the dead child with him.

Rough men took it from him and laid it on the ground. Eden crouched sobbing beside it.

"Oh, how pretty she is," moaned she.

Flit did indeed look very beautiful, and absolutely serene in her pallid stillness.

"Uncle John" came into the yard, and his lips trembled, as he gazed in the quiet little face. He put his hand on Luke's shoulder, and his sweet old face worked as he said, "Thee is a good fellow."

Somebody brought a shutter, and Luke's

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mother threw a sheet over Flit when she was placed upon the boards. The crowd formed itself into an irregular procession. Luke, all dripping wet, walked beside Eden, and "uncle John" followed the bearers. A bird twittered in an elm tree as they passed out of the factory yard.

Everybody halted, uncertain what to do, when they arrived before the Stone house, on whose walls the noon-day sun shone hot and bright. As they waited, a woman came wearily along the road.

"It's the mother, as has been lookin' for Flit," said lame Lucy, who had been drawn to the factory yard by the news of the accident, and had returned with the others across the stream. She ran forward, and caught Mrs. Ronian's hands. "Oh, oh," she cried, "be still, be still! Oh, do not take on, but Flit is dead an' gone. Indeed, she's safe, the poor child."

"What do you mean?" shrieked the woman. She wrenched herself from the girl's grasp, threw up her arms, and would have fallen, had not Luke caught her, and from him Eden received her mother's head on her knees.

The afternoon wore away amid painful bustle, and about sunset, Eden, who had been busy in the house all day, stole down to the doorway, and stood there breathing the cool air and

pushing the tumbling hair off her forehead. Lucy came limping round the house corner with Joe Glancy. When she saw them Eden took from her pocket the gilt ear-rings and held them out to the man.

"Oh, keep 'em," growled he.

"What for?" she said, with a wan smile.

"To wear at Flit's funeral?"

"Nonsense," he began, but Lucy interrupted, "Are n't you ashamed to bother her now?"

He took hold of the lame girl's arm so roughly that he almost shook her.

"Keep quiet, I tell you."

Eden pushed the ornaments into his hand. He dropped them on the ground and trod on them.

"You 'd better not throw me over," said he.

"Gardiner 'll never marry you *now*."

Eden whirled about and went into the house. He turned to Lucy angrily.

"You 've cheated me," he said; "you 've got Luke to make up with her."

Lucy had, in truth, seen Luke early that morning, and had told him that Eden was innocent of any intention to carouse the previous night, and had begged him to be gentle with her. She trembled now and grew white.

"You need n't think it 'll do you any good," he growled, "I 'm sick to death of you."

She drew a quick sobbing breath and moved her hands feebly and beseechingly towards him. "I never trouble you," she said, "I never say nothin' when you go with Kate nor Ann Simmons, nor none of 'em. But Eden ain't like them girls. It seemed too bad as harm should come to her."

"Just you shut up," he said, and swearing low, left her.

She seated herself wearily on the door-step, and watched him go with eyes that changed from anger to pain. She did not regret what she had done, but her heart was heavy. She felt a sort of wonder how it would seem to be as innocent as Eden was. Evil had been in her life so long! When did it first come? She was not wholly sure she had ever been quite ignorant and pure. She wondered again what it would be like. Lucy had often been heart-sick before, but never so sick of her own heart as now.

Bare, desolate poverty settled on the family after Flit's funeral. Ronian was still unable to work. The store-keeper would not give credit beyond the amount of Eden's wages, and there were many things needed. There was no question now of her going away from the village. She did not even think of leaving her mother and the children. They were so poor that sometimes she was hungry. They

sold some of their furniture to pay the undertaker, and Eden slept on the floor with her little brother and sister. She rose in the morning tired as when she went to bed at night.

Luke watched her from afar with a swelling heart. His mother could hardly reconcile herself to the idea that he would finally marry her, but tried to make herself contented with the thought of such a future. She, however, prevailed upon him to wait till it became evident that Eden could keep to her good resolutions. The girl herself cherished no hope that he would ever come to her as a lover, but she made a sort of religion out of the memory of his great goodness to her, in the hour of her temptation, a religion which strengthened her daily, as she avoided all her former comrades in frivolity.

Once she met Lucy on the street and said to her, "Don't think hard of me for not comin' to see you no more;" and the lame girl answered, "You'd better not come to our house, but I stand up for you everywhere."

"Thank you," said the other, "an' I'll stand by you, if ever you want me."

One Sunday evening in October, Eden knelt by the little white cross that marked Flit's grave. When she raised her eyes, Joe Glancy stood beside her. He put his hand on her shoulder, to hold her down.

"Let me go," she cried.

When she divined rather than heard his answer, she struggled away, flying blindly, stumbling among the graves. He followed her quickly, but when she neared the gate, she saw Luke Gardiner, and ran to him, calling his name. He took her panting in his arms. The overseer's lip curled. "Ah," said he, "where's the virtue in running from one man to another?" Luke sprang at him, but Eden held him back, and Joe walked away, sneering again,

"Oh, I won't interfere. I give my notice."

Luke led the trembling girl to one of the low graves and seated her there.

"I did follow you," he said. "I wanted to ask you to marry me."

"Oh, I'm not good enough."

"I think you are."

"I never did no very bad thing," she said, "but I was silly, an' I've been talked about. You can't feel the same as if I was real respected by folks."

"What I feel is," said he, "that you're the nicest girl I know."

Then she nestled in his arms, quite overcome, and murmured, "O Luke, you don't know how hard I'll try to be good."

"Well, then I guess you'll make out to do," he said, laughing, as he kissed her.

THE CHILD OF THE STATE.

JOSIE WELCH was six years old, and her brother Tommy was eight, at the time their mother became a widow. Mrs. Welch worked in a cotton factory. She rose at half-past five in the morning, lit a hasty fire in the kitchen, made some tea which she drank, and put some bread and butter on the table. In cold weather, she arranged the fire so that it would keep as long as possible, and left in the kitchen a small supply of fuel, before hurrying away to her work.

An hour or two later, Tommy, who was a methodical little soul, routed his sister and himself out of bed, when, without washing, they fell upon the bread and butter and devoured it. They then dressed themselves quite leisurely, although their toilet was a meagre one and included very little in the way of ablutions. Afterwards, Tommy took some more bread and butter and carried it into the mill to his mother,

for her breakfast. At the same time he took her a tin pail, filled the night before. She warmed the contents of this on the steam-pipes in the mill, and at twelve o'clock the children came to the factory and shared with her this made-over dinner, since the brief "nooning" did not give Mrs. Welch time to go home and warm her dinner there. A neighbor, at the widow's request, used to go into the house in the afternoon and replenish the fire, that the place might be warm when the children came home from school.

Tommy and Josie went pretty regularly to school in cold weather, because it was warmer there than at home, where the fire often languished under their inexperienced care, and sometimes died out entirely before the neighbor came. It was a chance whether she found it choked with ashes and injudicious feeding, or whether the fuel provided in the morning had proved insufficient to sustain it through so many hours. Mrs. Welch's bills became too large for her earnings, if she allowed the children to have free access to the shed where the coal was kept, so its door was locked and the neighbor had the key. Frequently the little lad and his sister gathered sticks in a pine grove hard by, or picked up shiny lumps of coal that were scattered near the railroad station, and they burned

the material thus procured with gay hearts and bursts of happy laughter. Doubtless, if they had not had the usual childish habit of accepting all events unthinkingly, they would have been very sure that it was the good God, or *má*y be, even the mother of God herself, who made men always spill fuel when loading and unloading coal cars.

There were many kind people in the village, who welcomed the shivering little creatures to their own firesides, in those families whose prosperity permitted that the mother or some elder daughter should stay at home from the mill.

At night, Mrs. Welch came home, gave the children their supper, swept, cleaned, washed dishes and clothes, cooked far into the night, and then lay down for a few hours of heavy sleep.

Tommy and Josie were as good children as could be expected under the circumstances; but Josie had, even then, a restless and excitable organization. In a happier home her peculiarities would perhaps have been carefully studied, and all this fine, nervous force might have been trained and utilized. But Josie belonged to a stratum of society far below those in which exists the practice of such study and consideration. She often ran away from home and school, and got herself into endless scrapes.

A year or more of this sort of life had passed when Mrs. Welch suddenly died. Her husband's brother took the children. Tommy prospered in his new home. He was well-grown and strong, and having nearly attained the age at which the law would permit him to be put at work in the mill, his uncle took him to the overseer, said he was old enough, and obtained employment for him. The child's wages were a welcome addition to the family income; indeed, a necessary addition, in view of the two extra mouths that were now to be fed, and the uncle considered the lie he had told to be dazzling in its whiteness.

Josie, meanwhile, did not prosper in the keeping of her aunt. She did not love to tend the babies. There were a pair of twins, and two other round, red-headed, pale-faced little ones under three years old, who fell largely to poor Josie's care. She was not cross to them, but she did not enjoy the labors imposed on her.

She hated to wash dishes, with a hatred as intense as, and perhaps not really more culpable than, that which is felt for this task by some more fortunate daughters of our common race. She did not enjoy the restrictions suddenly placed about her. They irked her greatly after the free street life she had led while her mother lived.

Josie had the instincts that in higher ranks of society are called Bohemian, and for which our many-sided civilization now begins to find respectable chance for action. In the lower strata of this civilization, however, the pressure of circumstances is so great that it bears down heavily on all such instincts, and frequently crushes and distorts them till they become impulses towards crime and outrage. The conscientious student of the forces in nature and character which shape or deform social life must often halt between two opinions, uncertain whether the sovereign remedy for many of the ills from which humanity suffers would be more liberty or more restraint.

It is the old problem which besets also the individual life. Are obstacles set in our way to warn us back from any special path, or that we may grow stronger by overcoming them as we go forward? Some there are who may decide whether they will go back or go on. Men and women who labor eleven hours a day in the stifling air of a great factory have limitations to their freedom of will. Those men must eat and sleep away most of their leisure hours. Those women must often toil on in the home after the mill work is done. They cannot spend time and money to go out in search of healthful recreation. The devil surrounds them with sensual

enjoyments only. Their jaded nerves respond most readily to such, and in factory villages but little effort is made, by what calls itself Christianity, to compete with Satan in his struggles for souls, or to prove his choice of pleasures an unwise one to the multitude.

So, in her new surroundings, Josie fared ill, and looked forward, in her childish brain, to faring worse.

Perhaps, under the best influences, her nature might have been morally weak. At any rate, unmoulded by such influences, she experienced no dutiful desires to grow older, take her place in the factory, and do her part towards the support of herself and of her uncle's numerous progeny. She ran away very frequently, and would stay away for hours and cause endless trouble. Finally, one morning she disappeared and was not found till the next day. The child had not yet got into any real harm, but she was certainly on the right road to ruin.

Her aunt, scandalized, provoked, and worn out, complained of her, had her arrested, poor little mite, taken before a magistrate, and sentenced to the Reform School. It was thus that, when she was ten years old, this unfortunate waif became the child of the State.

The institution in which Josie found herself usually contained about a hundred boys, and

from thirty to fifty girls, from seven or eight years old to twenty. The girls were sent there for all offenses, short of flagrant crime, which girls can commit. There was very little effort made at this time to classify or separate the older and more depraved inmates from those childish sinners who had drifted thither from sheer ill luck rather than through any fault of their own. At a later period, it became the custom, in that State, to send to an institution designed more especially for such characters all girls over sixteen arrested for certain vices. When Josie Welch entered the Reform School, such offenders, if under twenty, were often confined there, to spread the contagion of their own polluted lives among the younger children. Yet among these little ones, even, were sometimes to be found strange and abnormal tendencies to evil, developed, generally, by an utterly uncared-for childhood.

Josie was but an innocent, excitable, restless child, with no moral training, when she was dropped into this hot-bed of vice. What were the means which the State provided to cure these soul-sick little children? An account of the daily routine of the school will suffice to tell the story of several years of Josie's life.

The girls rose at five. Their sleeping accommodations were pretty good, since never more

than two occupied a room together, and in some cases separate apartments were provided. Nothing can be said in praise of the arrangements for bathing.

At half-past five the girls went to school, sleepy and hungry. In the summer it was not so bad, with the dawning light shining through the eastern windows and waking them up; but in winter doors and windows were shut, because the room was never very warm at that hour, the atmosphere was both chilly and close, and the children were stupid with sleepiness. At seven, the girls went to breakfast. At eight, they began to work. The older ones did the housework. One or two servants were employed in the immediate family of the superintendent, but all the rest of the work in that immense establishment, except, of course, the actual care of the part of the house which was occupied by the boys, was done by the girls. The little children, and such of the larger ones as were not needed in the other household departments, sewed and knit.

Although families are naturally, and often rightly, unwilling to take into service girls who have spent their minority in a Reform School, the state had these girls taught to do well nothing but domestic labor; the sewing and knitting which they learned being too coarse to

avail them afterwards in the effort to support themselves. The boys in the Reform School which we are describing are taught a trade. The girls are only qualified to do housework; but at the expiration of their terms it is difficult for them to obtain places in families, and they are generally so demoralized that they cannot safely be admitted to households where there are children.

To return to the daily routine. The girls had a short recess in the forenoon, just long enough for them to move about, a little, or, if they wished, to run out-of-doors. At noon they had dinner, and then began work again, which lasted till the supper hour at four. They had nothing to eat afterwards. At five they went into school again, and remained there till seven; and then they were sent to bed. Thus all their schooling came between supper and breakfast, so as not to interfere with the day's work.

Josie did not learn much at school. She hated it, and she hated the long whitewashed corridors, and the little cooped-up yard where all the drying of clothes for the whole establishment was done, so that the girls could seldom move freely about in it.

The boys had a large play-ground. Josie could see it through a knot-hole she discovered

in the fence. This knot-hole was her own peculiar property, her one great possession and secret. She told none of the other girls about it. She seldom looked through it lest they should see her. It was half hidden by one of the posts to the fence. The poor child had a great pride in this little secret of hers, and never dreamed what a fatal thing this knot-hole, with its outlook on forbidden grounds, was yet to be to her.

Josie hated the slow pace at which she always felt obliged to walk about the house and yard. The girls never ran there. The boys, on the other side of the fence, ran and tumbled each other about and shouted; but the girls, on their side, were always silent and slow of motion and sad of face, except when they quarreled among themselves. Even Josie, young as she was, felt that a doom was on them all, and could perceive the settled hopelessness which brooded over the faces of all the girls, whether they were otherwise bright or stupid.

One day a lady came to visit the school, and brought her dainty little daughter with her. As they stood in the hall, Josie came in from recess.

The two children stared, open-eyed, at each other. The fair, curled darling of her mother looked at the close-cropped head, the dark, wild

eyes, the sulky mouth, of the child of the State. Then, with a little pout of aversion and fear, the golden-haired one turned away, and an angry look came into Josie's face.

The mother, bending over her darling, coaxed and murmured to her a moment, till the little one turned back, ran towards Josie, and with a sweet smile, pushed into her hand a tiny china doll, new that day and not yet dressed.

Josie took it awkwardly, but looked her wonder and delight, till the matron who stood near bade her thank the lady and the little girl; at which Josie, overcome with bashfulness, fled away to the sewing-room, tightly clutching her doll. The matron would have followed and forced her to return, had not the lady mother interposed a smiling plea for the childish terror she well understood. Nevertheless, Josie was held for several days in high disgrace, and was frequently reminded of her bad manners "to that kind lady and sweet little girl." She was rather sorry when she reflected on her behavior, but she consoled herself by petting and playing with her doll, and teaching to it the polite methods of action in which she herself had failed.

She was very much afraid that the doll would take cold, as it had no clothes, and she tore off a strip from her only flannel petticoat

in which to wrap it. She was very happy when, soon after this, the day came for sorting over the rags of the household.

All the rags which accumulated in the establishment through the year were stuffed into great bags kept in the attic. These bags were brought down annually into the room which served as school and sewing-room. They were emptied on the floor, and the girls picked them over and sorted out the woolen and cotton pieces. The poor creatures enjoyed this work hugely, with the break it made in the daily routine. Smiles lit up their heavy faces, and a visitor on that day might have been beguiled into a belief that the inmates of this Reform School were tolerably happy.

Josie's vagabond instincts reveled in this companionship of rags. She made precious discoveries in these motley heaps, such discoveries as can be made only by the eyes of childhood.

Here she found a bit of bright, new calico. How it contrasted with her own dingy, oft-washed, and faded gown! What tales it seemed to tell the child, whispering of possible luxury and of new dresses! — forever unattainable by her. Now she came across a tiny bit of red silk, and now a faded blue necktie was discerned among the rough débris of half a dozen gray cloth jackets, such as the boys wore.

Josie's soul burned within her. Her little heart throbbed with longing. She thought of her gownless doll, and she grew bold. She went up to the matron in charge, and asked her if she might have some of these little pieces for herself. Fortunately, the matron did not know that the child had torn her petticoat, and was so touched by the seeming honesty of this petition that she gave permission, but told the little girl to bring for her inspection all that she wanted. Poor Josie brought so many that the matron, fearful of giving her too great happiness, was forced to tell her to select six pieces and put the others in the common stock.

Such a time as the little girl had to choose! But at last she heaved a great sigh of mingled satisfaction and regret that the pleasant but puzzling task of choice was over. As she did so she heard some one speak to her, and looking up she saw with affright the superintendent of the school standing by her. He was an immense man, with an oily smile which played over a cruel mouth. Josie's fears were assuaged a little when she perceived that the voice which had addressed her came not from him, but from the lips of a lady by his side, — a lady with a tender face and sweet, deep eyes.

She bent over the startled child, and asked her gently what she meant to do with those

bits of cloth. Josie stammered something about dressing her doll. The lady smiled pleasantly, but the matron drawing near said that Josie would have to pay more attention to her sewing in the school before she would be able to sew very well for herself. Josie shrank away, sat down by a heap of rags, and turned it over with her little hands.

The lady looked at the soft, wild eyes of the child till a moist tenderness came into her own, and turning suddenly away she walked out into the corridor, and stood gazing out of the window over the yard, where the girls could not play because it was filled with clothes hung out to dry.

The superintendent followed her, and coming up said blandly, "You have now seen the whole of the institution, Mrs. Keyes."

"Yes," she answered, absently; then, after a moment's pause, she spoke quickly: "And I have seen many others like it. I have spent ten years studying the classes from which our reform schools, our houses of correction, and our jails are filled, and this is my conviction: that you take the children who are the worst born and bred in the world, and put them under circumstances which would render desperate, and consequently depraved, the best natures you could find. Your system is a failure, and you know it is."

The eyes of the superintendent contracted savagely for an instant. Then he said, as mildly as ever, "On the contrary, madam, a large proportion of the boys who leave this school go to earning their living honestly, and lead respectable lives."

"And the girls?"

"Oh, the girls! Well — the girls are a great deal worse. Women always are worse than men, you know, when they are bad. There's a peculiar devil in women, somehow, begging your pardon."

"You mean that you do not reform the girls," said the lady, curtly.

"No; there is no possibility of reforming the girls. It is merely a house of correction for them, and serves a very good purpose in keeping them out of mischief for a few years, at least."

"And you only reform more boys than girls," said Mrs. Keyes, with some indignant passion in her voice, "because you don't undertake to cure the boys of certain faults. It is no matter when they go out into the world, whether they have or have not these vices. They are called reformed, if they will work. That is all. No, there is another reason why you reform more boys. You treat them better, with more respect, and thus you inculcate self-

respect in them. You teach them a useful trade. You give them a decent yard to play in. You give them good seats at chapel. But what do you give to the girls to reform them? Vacant minds, a dismal present, and despair for the future. There's a peculiar devil in women, is there? You remember what the Bible says. You may sweep that chamber empty of devils as many times as you please, and they will come back, if you put nothing else in their place. Take that child, in there, who had the rags for her doll. Anybody can see what a nervous, impressible, restless creature she is. If she is chained down to this life of hopeless monotony, without change and without chance, of course her feverish feelings will find an outlet in some wrong way."

The superintendent's face had grown black with anger as the lady went vehemently on, unheeding his wrath, and he spoke quickly and irritably: "They find it now. She's one of the worst and most unmanageable children we have in the school."

"I don't doubt it. What was she sent here for?"

"For running away from home."

"Poor little thing! Mr. Brewster, why should n't you take these girls out, one or two at a time, once in a while, to walk, as a reward

of good behavior? You'd see if they would n't try to earn the privilege."

Whether the superintendent's anger would, at this juncture, have overcome his politeness, it is impossible to say, for just then he was called off by one of the officers to attend to some new guests, and Mrs. Keyes, meanwhile, having finished her visit, went her way sorrowfully and indignantly.

When the superintendent had finished with the later visitors he returned to the sewing-room and ordered Josie to put her cherished rags among the others. The child, in a furious passion, refused to do so. The matron interposed, rather fearfully. Mr. Brewster seized what pieces he could discover on the struggling girl's person, threw them into the general heap, and then dragged Josie away to one of the dormitories, where she was locked up for the rest of the day. She had, however, saved the blue necktie and a couple of bits of calico; and after she had regained her freedom she clothed her doll with these.

A few days later the torn state of her petticoat was discovered, and the missing fragment of flannel was traced to her doll's wardrobe. Josie managed to secrete and save the doll in the storm that followed, but she herself suffered fresh disgrace and punishment. Her character

seemed somewhat altered after this, and there were signs of desperation in her moods.

After Josie had been in the Reform School a year or two, she was taken out by a farmer's wife to help take care of the babies of the family. She could be returned at any time when Mrs. Faber saw fit. This was a happy, healthful season in Josie's life. She went to school part of the time, she tended the baby, she washed the dishes, and she rambled over the farm so much that she did not care to run away. But after a year and a half of this pleasant life, Mrs. Faber's oldest daughter came home from school to stay, and the mother had no more need of the services of the little alien.

The next place to which she was sent was in the city, and she did not do well there. At Mrs. Faber's she had been treated as a child of the house might have been. Here she was only a servant, and one to be specially watched and suspected, because she came from the Reform School. She soon merited all this suspicion, and in six months she was returned to the school with a character which caused the superintendent and teachers to watch her in their turn.

When she was fifteen she was once more launched out in life. Again she had a place on a farm. It was one of those sterile, hilly farms which abound in New England, where rocky

pastures afford a scanty sustenance to the few cattle or sheep that wander among their gray, stony hillocks, and where huckleberry bushes grow in rampant profusion. There were old orchards scattered about, where gnarled and aged apple-trees sprouted innumerable new shoots, which no careful hand ever pruned away. They were dark, twisted, uncanny trees, that in the spring-time of "apple years" burst forth into strange beauty, when rose-tinted blossoms covered every living twig and branch, and threw into dark shadow the dead, massive limbs that coiled about among the flowers, themselves ungarnished by green leaf, pink bud, or full white bloom.

But it was not in the beauty of the spring-time that Josie came into the country. It was in the autumn, when golden-rod waved in every nook and cranny of the stony fields, and lined the wild, wandering roads with glory. Far around stretched blue hills drenched deep with color in the autumnal haze, and the roads that traversed the valley and climbed the distant slopes seemed to lead straight up to heaven.

Josie was driven to the farm-house in the market-wagon in which Mr. Jacobs had come to the school for her. Arrived at their destination, she got out and meekly followed her new master into the kitchen.

Mrs. Jacobs stood by the stove, frying doughnuts, and just as she turned round to look Josie over, the door from the woodshed beyond the kitchen opened, and a tall young fellow came in. His eyes fell on Josie, and she returned his glance boldly for a moment; then her lids drooped shyly, and she stood staring at the floor, while Mrs. Jacobs, the farmer, and the young man all brutally inspected her. Alas! Josie had not been educated in a school of refinement, and Charley Manton's rude gaze charmed while it abashed her.

What need to tell the story of the weeks that followed? Flossy Jacobs, a colorless blonde, was in love with Charley Manton, and had fancied her passion returned — as probably it was — till this girl from the Reform School crossed their path.

Charley was a minister's son, an orphan, now working for his board on Mr. Jacob's farm. He was only eighteen, but he had lived a long life already; familiar with vice, he still paused on the threshold of crime. Some sudden fancy, perhaps for Flossy Jacobs's blue eyes, had prompted him to spend these weeks of the harvest season in honest labor; but he had begun to tire of it, and he had wild visions of an adventurous career in California or Mexico, upon which he meant soon to enter. He was cruelly

selfish, but he possessed all the charm which sometimes belongs to strong, heartless natures.

I never saw Josie Welch but once, and it was about this time. She was hardly full grown, but she had a lithe, graceful form, masses of dark, waving hair, good features and complexion, cheeks and chin rounded, and lips a little full. Out from this immature, girlish face looked the saddest, softest, wildest dark eyes I ever saw. They haunted me for years. They have followed me ever since, seeming to beseech me to give language to their dumbness and tell their story. They seemed to understand so little, to want so much; but when I came to know the whole of Josie's life, they took upon themselves a new character, and to my imagination there was something awful and accusing in their remembered gaze. I could not put the memory of them away from me, and I learned, at last, that they were not meant to be forgotten.

Flossy Jacobs hated Josie, and in a few weeks the unfortunate girl was sent back to the Reform School. The morning the wretched outcast was to go, Flossy kept persistently by her side, to prevent the possibility of any sentimental leave-taking with Charley Manton. This young man, however, marched boldly up, where the two girls stood, at last, in the doorway, waiting for the farmer to come and unhitch the

horse and drive Josie away over the wild roads, where the golden-rod had faded and fallen before the first frosts of winter.

Josie shivered with the cold and with the passion of pain and hatred in her tortured heart. Charley turned to Flossy and said, roughly, "Go in and get your blanket shawl, and lend it to Josie for the ride. She can send it back in the wagon. You 've made a pretty mess, you have, but you need n't kill her with the cold. Go in, I say."

There was a blaze that boded evil in his eyes, and Flossy dared not, for her life, disobey him. He took Josie's hand and laughed a little bitterly. "You poor little wretch!" he said; "no more good times for you. Run away, if you get a chance, and I'll take you to Mexico with me." Then he stooped and kissed her, and, as he lifted his head, he saw Flossy's angry eyes behind Josie, as she came along the entry with the shawl. He stepped forward to take the wrap, which she threw at him in a fury. He laughed as he caught it, and took her firmly by the wrist.

"Mind what you say and do," he said in a fierce whisper. "I've stood all I will stand. There's two can play at telling. And your pa and your ma might not like all they'd hear."

Flossy turned away cowed, and Charley

wrapped Josie up, half tenderly, and helped her ostentatiously into the wagon when the farmer came.

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to add that when Mr. Jacobs returned that night from the city, he informed Charley that his services were no longer needed on the farm.

Josie went back to be watched and suspected, and to hate the whitewashed walls and the long corridors and the monotonous daily routine, the silent meals, the morning and the evening schools, the sense of suffocation everywhere, as she had never hated them before.

She was desperate, and yet she was nearer salvation than ever before in her life. Her love purified her, as love must purify. She had not been very bad hitherto, but she had grown up among girls many of whom were of bad lives and vicious propensities. She had listened to their talk, she had laughed at their jokes, and had been contaminated by them. Now she shrank from their coarseness. She had read some pure stories of love and marriage while at Mr. Jacobs's. All the passion and all the purity of which she had read now filled her heart. She formed to herself an ideal that she would gladly be like for Charley Manton's sake. She believed he would marry her if he could, if she were free to go out to him in that wide, beauti-

ful world of which, since her childhood, she had had such few glimpses. She would have given her life for him. She wanted at least to give him a pure heart. He was a minister's son, she knew ; she had wild, foolish notions that he belonged to some half princely race ; so high above *her*, alas, seemed any respectability of blood and breeding. She felt that she must strain every nerve to be worthy of him.

It would, perhaps, have been a wiser effort of the conscience if she had tried to attain this worthiness by a strict compliance with the rules of the institution of which she was a member, and by a faithful service therein. But, possibly because her moral nature was weak, it never occurred to Josie that the Reform School really had any claim on her obedience or her loyal devotion. Certainly she never yielded any which she could avoid. She simply detested it all, — the routine, the superintendent, the teachers, the girls and their coarseness.

Many a night, when things had gone more wrong than usual through the day, when her unsubdued temper had shown itself in sulky looks, in muttered words, and impatient flashes of those dark eyes, when the matrons had been cross, when the washing — for Josie worked now in the laundry — had made her back ache intolerably, and when "marks" had crowded

against her record, the unhappy child cried away long hours before she slept, smothering her sobs in the bedclothes, so that her roommate should never guess her trouble.

The chapel of the school was a long, pleasant room, with a low platform at one end, having a desk on it. The boys, during services, sat in settees on the floor, facing this platform. Behind them, at the extreme end of the hall, was an elevated gallery shut off by a wooden fence rising some three or four feet. Into this pen the girls were marshaled on Sundays. The boys came into the hall first, from their part of the house, and took their seats on the floor, directly before the speaker. After they were seated, the door from the other side of the house, which led into the gallery, was opened, and the girls filed in. They were forbidden to look at the boys as they entered. When they sat down, those in the front rows could see the speaker over the fence if they took pains to look, but he could see little of them except the tops of their heads. The speakers who came there were sometimes ministers, sometimes gentlemen from the city, who were interested in the school or in the classes of juvenile offenders from whose ranks it was recruited. They generally addressed their remarks to the boys. It was difficult for them to realize that those

half-unseen female creatures set aside behind that wooden fence were to be affected by their words. They encouraged the boys to do well, and promised them an honorable future if they did. These gentlemen were usually too well informed to hold out to these lads the possibility of possessing the presidential office; still, the careers of Abraham Lincoln and Henry Wilson were sometimes too tempting to be wholly ignored. There was not much said to the girls. It was difficult for the most sanguine believer in the reformation wrought in the school, or the most hopeful observer of social phenomena, to picture any very bright future as attainable by these pariahs. Sometimes the speaker would remember that half-hidden audience behind the fence, and amid his exhortations to the boys would helplessly add, "and girls," and feel that his duty was done. The girls, in a vague way, understood and felt all these things. They rather liked the singing, but otherwise cared very little for the chapel services. One reason they liked the singing was that then they stood up and could look round among the boys, — though, of course, they were forbidden to, — and could even sometimes make stealthy signals to them. Whether these unfortunate young people could ever have been taught to behave quite properly in each

other's presence may be a question ; but certain it is that in the institution described here the only effort made was to keep the sexes apart, and no attempt whatever was put forth to teach them how to behave when they did come in contact.

It was one Sunday morning, that, standing up to sing, Josie Welch saw Charley Manton in the chapel below her. His face was turned from her, of course. She saw only the back of his head and his broad shoulders, but she knew him, and felt a great dizzy throb. She grew faint and white, but happily there was no one near who cared enough for her to notice her agitation. She watched him as a drowning man might watch a nearing sail, looked at him as the rich man in hell might have looked into heaven when its gates opened before him, and heaven, safety, hope and happiness, all grew possible to her. She sang no more that day, but only looked. Even when they sat down again, and she could see him no more, she kept her eyes turned towards the part of the hall where he sat. She fancied the face she had not seen, and dreamed a thousand dreams in the short half-hour before the service was over. Afterwards she began to wonder how Charley Manton, a minister's son, her imagined prince, came to be in the Reform School.

The facts were very simple. He had come to the city and made his living for some time by his wits, till he was finally arrested for some petty larceny. The judge before whom he was brought remembered his father, and sent him to the Reform School, although he was older than most boys are when first condemned there. The judge hoped thereby to save his old friend's son from the disgrace of imprisonment in jail, and perhaps to break up in its beginning the career of crime on which the youth seemed about to enter.

Charley doubtless remembered that Josie was an inmate of this house, when he came there, but he made no effort to renew his acquaintance with her.

Josie, on her part, had recourse to the knot-hole she had found when a child. She spent all the minutes she could snatch from the vigilance of the teachers, and the coarse observation of the girls, staring through that hole into the boys' yard, hoping to see Charley pass. Several days elapsed before she saw him. When she did it was at a most favorable moment. He was absolutely alone on his side of the fence, and she on hers, and he was passing very near her. She put her lips to the hole and softly called, "Charley!" He heard her, sent his quick eyes roving round the yard, and in an

instant spied the tiny opening. He went up to it.

"Who are you?" he said.

"Oh, don't you know me? I'm Josie."

"Yes, I thought so. Well, I don't see as I can shake hands with you or kiss you through this fence; but never mind; I'm glad to hear you, if I can't see you. I've been expecting you to make some demonstration."

Josie trembled at the sound of his voice. They whispered a moment more, and made some arrangement for talking there occasionally, and for slipping letters through when they dared not speak to each other. Then each turned back to the house, which, of course, they entered at different sides. Josie went to her work in the laundry, as happy a girl as ever lived.

Two weeks after this, the superintendent passed Charley Manton as at noon time he stood slouching in the door of the workshop. Mr. Brewster, though a very large man, had a soft, noiseless step, and for once Charley's vigilant senses were off their guard. The young man held a bit of paper in his hand, and was reading it, while a smile half-pleased, half-scornful, curved his handsome lips. The superintendent stepped suddenly up behind him and snatched the paper from him.

Charley turned with the spring of a tiger and with a loud oath ; but when he saw who it was he stopped and stood still. The rage in the boy's eyes was matched by the triumphant and mocking glare in the master's orbs. Charley did not speak while the superintendent glanced rapidly over the paper. It was a letter signed "Josie."

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Mr. Brewster. "Josie Welch ! I knew that girl was up to something by her looks, and I've been on the watch for her. I heard you were at Mr. Jacobs' farm with her last fall, and I suspected her excitement was about you. Making love to her, are you ? What do you want to do it for ? It's pretty business for you."

"Oh, she does well enough to pass away the time here," answered Charley, with the look of a devil in his young face. "If I were out of here, I would n't take her to wipe my shoes."

The superintendent smiled appreciatingly, pocketed the letter, and left Charley, who, as soon as he found himself alone, gave a long, sharp whistle, and said in a low tone, "So, you think that's up, do you, sir ? We'll see."

This is a literal copy of Josie's letter, spelling, capital letters, and all, and it may serve to show the extent of the education likely to be acquired in the Reform School : —

DEER CHARLEY, — I got the pictures safe, thank you dont come heer never enny more. i shall cry all nite if i dont get letters or see you thru the hole but it is n't safe, i know the super is looking out for us. I can feel myself get red whenever i see him. I dont care what he does to me if he finds out but he would flog you dredfully and i dont want to get you in enny truble. i love you all the same deer Charley, so no more at present from
JOSIE.

With this epistle in his pocket, the superintendent marched directly to the laundry, and waited a few minutes till the girls came in with the matron to begin their afternoon work. Josie started guiltily when she saw Mr. Brewster, but proceeded quietly to the ironing-table, where she took out one of his shirts and began to press it. He loitered about the room a moment, spoke to one or two of the other girls, and exchanged a few words with the matron, and then said suddenly, in a loud, clear voice, "Josie Welch, come here with me."

She set down her iron, threw one frightened glance at the matron, turned violently red, then white as a corpse, placed one hand on the ironing-board, steadied herself a second, and then followed him without a word.

He led her through one or two entries to a

large empty room, sometimes used to store wood. Like the laundry they had just left it was in the basement, and it had whitewashed walls and a stone floor. When they had entered the room he locked both the doors leading from it, and then looked at the girl with cruel steadiness and said, "I want you to give me the letter you have had from Charley Manton."

"I have not had any letter."

"Oh," he sneered, "perhaps you don't know who Charley Manton is!"

"I knew somebody named that, when I was out on trial."

"You did n't know he was in the school?"

"No, sir."

"Well, he is. Birds of a feather flock together, you know. And I want the letter he's sent you."

"He has n't sent me none."

"And you have n't seen him or spoken to him since he's been here?"

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"Before God, I have n't!" cried Josie. Her face was dogged and hopeless, but determined.

The superintendent drew from under his coat a rattan, and struck her three or four times. She winced horribly, and grew whiter still with pain and fear, but she did not cry out. Then

he crunched his teeth, and brought his lower jaw forward, while a murderous look came into his eyes, and catching her hand he said, "I know you've got a letter from Charley Manton. I've got your letter to him in my pocket. If you don't give me the one you have, I'll get a larger rattan and flog you till you do."

She put her hand in her bosom and drew out a little package. He seized it from her, and turned it over contemptuously. There were three or four little colored prints wrapped in a bit of white paper, but no writing anywhere. If Josie had any letters from Charley she had hidden them. The superintendent tore the pictures, which were innocent enough, into pieces, and stuffed the bits into his pocket. Josie would gladly have murdered him that moment, and she looked as if she would.

"You need n't make a fool of yourself over that fellow," said he, meeting her furious dark eyes with his own. "He does n't care anything about you; he told me so. He said if he were out of this place, he would n't take you to wipe his shoes."

"I don't believe," answered the girl, "that he said any such thing."

Mr. Brewster stared at her for a moment, and he picked up the rattan which had dropped on the floor; but then he gave a short laugh, and

said, "Go back to your work now, and mind what you do after this."

A few days later, the judge who had sentenced Charley Manton to the Reform School obtained the consent of the authorities that he should go out on trial, with far less restriction placed about him than was usual in the cases of inmates of the Reform School sent out before the expiration of their term of sentence. But the influence of Charley's friends and the fact that he was of such good family operated powerfully in his favor. He was put at work in a machine-shop, a few miles from the city, and he boarded in a respectable family.

Josie, disgraced and suspected, remained in the school, undergoing many physical hardships and a mental torture which strained her nerves to their utmost, till at last an outbreak came.

It was a chilly morning in March, when Josie took down to the laundry a plant which Charley Manton had given her the autumn before, at the farm. The pot which contained it was too small for it, and she delayed her work a few minutes to transplant it into a little box she had found in the yard. The laundry matron came in just then, and, happening to feel cross, as she passed Josie she caught the plant from the girl's hand, and flung it into the stove. Josie gave a cry like that of some wild beast in pain, and

darting forward seized it from the flames, put it back in the box and smoothed the earth around its roots, her hands trembling with excitement. The matron pushed her aside, took box and plant, opened the window, and tossed them out into the frosty air. "Go to work, Josie Welch!" she said.

Josie stood still one second, then, panting and struggling as with some unseen evil spirit, she sobbed and swore and cursed. Her breath came hard; she grew dark in the face and sprang at the matron, who darted aside and called out, "Susy Jones, go for Mr. Brewster." Then Josie burst into a peal of laughter more horrible than her ravings; and after the laughter died away, scream followed scream; but she made no further attack on the woman.

"Susy," cried the matron again, as she saw the other girls, Susy among them, standing motionless around.

Josie's own cries brought the superintendent there. He came up to her and attempted to take her arm. She dashed herself on him, like a wild cat. He seized a basin that stood near a tub of cold water, and filling it again and again threw the chilly flood over her. She broke loose from his grasp. He pursued and caught her, dragged her back to the tub, and poured the water over her while she gasped and

struggled. Choked and breathless, her sight growing dim, a horrible agony in all her frame, she groped in blind fury, while the icy water still dashed relentlessly on her person, until she caught hold of the basin and threw her whole weight upon it, to drag it from her tormentor. He pulled it back and hit her under the chin with such force that she nearly bit her tongue off. Her mouth filled with blood, which poured out and stained his hands. He saw his advantage over the dizzy, half-stunned girl, and followed it up. Josie fell reeling to the floor. He said, afterwards, that she fell down herself. The frightened girls who witnessed the scene always said he struck her again with the basin and knocked her down.

They took her to a cell and locked her up for three days. For a week she could not talk, because of the blood which poured into her mouth, and she was able to eat only enough to keep her alive.

One day before she was released two of the matrons came in and told her to sit down, for they were going to cut her hair off. She looked imploringly at them, and saw that entreaty and protest would be alike vain. She submitted, and they sheared her beautiful dark hair short, and then made a clumsy attempt to shingle it. No reason was assigned for this act, but Josie

supposed it was intended for punishment. She wept bitterly at first for the loss of her lovely hair, but her shorn head soon suggested to her a daring idea.

She went back to work in the laundry, and began to secrete occasional articles of male clothing. She ripped open the mattress of her bed and hid them in that. One day she was in the sewing-room, when a quantity of clothing was brought in to be mended. When left alone with it, she stole from the pile a pair of trousers. She coveted a jacket, but dared not take that also, lest the theft should be discovered.

It happened that she had then a room by herself. She rose at twelve o'clock that night, dressed herself rapidly, and stood in the star-light at last, in shirt and trousers, looking like a delicate, pretty boy. She took the sheets from her bed and tossed them through the transom over the locked door of her chamber. She stuffed her shoes into her shirt, climbed out herself, glided like a shadow past the doors of the other dormitories, and reached the window at the end of the corridor. She pushed up the sash and looked out. Fifteen feet below was the roof of the front porch.

She looked down till she felt dizzy, then took the sheets, tied them securely together, fastened one end to the blind, and, without stopping to

think, swung herself out. The blind creaked frightfully. She dropped close by the window of the superintendent's room, and, gathering herself up, heard sounds within as of some one stirring in sleep, — waking, perhaps, at the noise she had made!

She stood up, and stared with her beautiful wild eyes into his room. A low light burned there, and she saw him tossing on his bed. What kept him from fully waking, God only knows. Perhaps it would have been better, even for hapless Josie, if he had awakened.

She threw her arm up as she turned away, and in a low murmur muttered a dreadful curse upon the sleeper's head. She went to the edge of the piazza and again looked down. The pillars that supported the roof of the porch were too large for her to clasp. The sheets dangled helplessly in front of that window behind her. She saw, at last, the pipe — a large, strong one — which drained the eaves. It ran down by the column. She swung herself over, and clinging desperately to the pipe, and bracing against the pillar, after some dizzy, desperate struggles found herself on the ground in the front yard. She easily made her escape from this small inclosure; climbing a low fence, and dropping into the street, she ran out into the free, horrible darkness of the night.

The gray, chilly dawn was close at hand when, shivering and faint, Josie crouched by the roadside, in the suburbs of a large manufacturing town, in the neighborhood of the city she had left. After a night of terror and excitement, the early morning often brings to jaded nerves and brain a peculiar sense of suffering and discouragement. Josie felt that the broadening light was creeping on solely to discover her to all the hounding police, who would be, she knew, on her track that day; she was bitterly cold, and, covering her face with her hands, she crept yet closer to the fence, and sobbed and cried. Her hour of heroism was over, and the hour of despair had struck. Just then she heard a quick step sounding near her, and starting up, she saw Charley Manton, and flung herself toward him with a cry of unutterable gladness.

"Hulloa!" he exclaimed. "What's all this?"

"Oh, Charley!" sobbing wildly and clinging to him.

"Well, this is a pretty piece of work. You've run away, I suppose. Plucky, on my word, and you've turned into a boy." He pushed her off half roughly, so he could look at her. "Well, you don't act much like a boy. You needn't flatter yourself. You'd better get into petti-

coats again. Your disguise is not a success. You poor little fool!"

"I want to go somewhere and get work, where they can't find me," sobbed she, with a desperate effort to assert a maidenly pride, and act as if she did not mean to throw herself wholly on his protection. Poor child, where had she learned maidenliness, among the bold young boys and girls at the Reform School!

"How can you get work till you've got a dress? It's no use for you to try to get a place as a boy. You could n't deceive anybody twenty-four hours."

"I'll go to my uncle," she said.

"Do you know where he is? And do you think your aunt will be glad to see you back again? Have they taken much pains about you these six years?"

"I've got a brother."

"Yes, I know it. He did work here. He enlisted in the navy a month ago, and his ship has sailed."

"You know that? Then," she cried, "you know where my uncle is?"

"Your uncle, Josie, is dead. Your aunt has married again."

"Why did n't you tell me this before?"

"Oh," he laughed, "I wanted to see what your ideas of action were."

"Oh, Charley, what can I do?"

"Why, I guess we can manage you. Come with me; I'll take care of you."

She drew back a little, and said, "I don't want to go with you unless" —

"Unless what?"

"You know what," she stammered. "I ain't a bad girl. You know I ain't, Charley. You would n't have liked me if I had been."

"Well, is it going to make you a bad girl to go with me? Come, don't be too stuck-up."

"I'd rather get work."

"Try it, and see if you can. You're a Reform School girl. That's enough against you."

"They won't ask where I'm from, at a factory."

"And you understand factory work?"

"No, but I can learn."

"Do you mean to ask for a girl's work or a boy's?"

Josie was silent. Why had she not brought her dress with her from the Reform School? It might have saved her now.

"You know," went on Charley, "that if you're found out you'll be taken back to the school, and you know what'll happen to you then; and you'll be found out, as sure as you try for work."

"Oh," said Josie shuddering, "the superintendent has used me awful."

"I don't doubt it, the old brute! Come with me, and I'll fix it. Why should n't you come with me? Ain't I your best friend?"

His eyes were magnetic as he fixed them on her, and this faint touch of tenderness in his speech set her to sobbing afresh. In a moment, she raised her head, fixed on him her lovely eyes, from which looked forth a soul's last appeal, and with a sweet, steady sadness she said, "Will you marry me, Charley?"

He laughed: "Oh, may be so. Come on, come on, there's a good girl. Hurry up, midget. There'll be a *million* people in the street in a few minutes! The whole town is waking up. There'll be a devil of a row if you're caught here."

She heaved a long, shivering sigh, and followed him.

Seven years afterwards, Mrs. Faber visited the House of Correction. It was Sunday, and the inmates were assembled in the chapel, — vagrants, drunkards, prostitutes, men and women out of whom debauchery seemed to have stamped the last spark of divinity, almost of humanity. The good country woman shuddered as she glanced around. She had come to see the institution from mere curiosity, but that feeling shrank back abashed before the hor-

rible reality of what she saw. As she looked around she perceived, at last, among the women, a girl in whose face was something strangely familiar. Those dusky eyes seemed to start up from some cloudy past and stare at her through clearing mists. Mrs. Faber beckoned to one of the officials, who came to her during some pause in the services.

"What is that girl's name?" she asked, "the dark one who sits third on the second seat from the front. The one with a scarlet ribbon at her throat."

"Oh, Josie Burns she calls herself. I don't suppose it is her real name."

"Do you know anything about her?"

"Not much. She grew up in the Reform School at —, she says. She's rather refined and gentle in her ways, except when she's angry. She has a quick temper, and I guess she's quite a desperate character. She says she has one or two children, and sometimes she says she's had to live as she has to support them, but I presume that's all lies. You can't tell much by what any of these women say."

"What will become of her children, if she has any?"

"It's rather sad to think of, but the girls will grow up like her, probably, and the boys will become thieves and tramps, most likely. Such women are the mothers of criminals."

"Is she here for long?"

"Six months, and she's been here three. It's quite a story. She threw herself under the railroad train as it was coming out of the station, and was pulled off the track just in time to save her, and then, as there did n't seem to be anything else to do with her, she was sent here."

"And where can her children be?"

"I don't believe she has any; but she says she had got them places, and thought she'd take herself out of the way. Do you know her?"

"She reminds me of a little girl I took once from that Reform School, but it's not the same name."

"I dare say it is she. They change their names a dozen times, and sometimes they really get married besides."

"I should like to speak to her after the services are over."

"Oh, certainly."

As the women were about to leave the chapel, Mrs. Faber went up to the one who had roused her interest, and said to her simply, "Are n't you Josie Welch?"

"Yes," answered the girl, "and you are Mrs. Faber, that I used to live with. I had a very good time at your house, and you were very kind to me."

"Oh, Josie," said Mrs. Faber, half crying, "I am so sorry to see you here. Such a nice little girl as you were."

No tears stood in Josie's hopeless eyes, even when she saw the kindly drops in the other's eyes.

"Thank you," she said. "It would have been better for me if I could have stayed with you always."

"I wish you had," sobbed Mrs. Faber. Josie smiled slowly; it was so many ages too late for such a wish!

"Oh, Josie!" cried Mrs. Faber, after a moment more, "they tell me you threw yourself under the train. How could you?"

"I was drunk," answered the girl in a hard, cold voice, "and I thought, besides, if I died that way, may be Charley Manton would hear of it some day."

"A STRANGER, YET AT HOME."

**"I walk once more a haunted shore,
A stranger, yet at home, —
A land of dreams I roam."**

PRUDENCE WARNER stood twisting her brown hair into an irreproachable knot at the back of her head. She looked at herself in the glass, with gray, honest eyes beaming softly under straight pretty brows. Her mouth was sweet but homely, and her nose was delicate. She was thirty-five and a spinster, — a very contented one; but it may have been that her contentment under the limited conditions of her life arose from a somewhat limited nature. She was habitually diligent in the Sunday-school, and devoted to the temperance society. She liked to sew on her gowns, and sometimes found pleasure in very harmless gossip. This last idiosyncrasy was fiercely denounced by her mother, Mrs. Arvilla Warner.

"The idee," said that matron once, "of pesterin' yourself to find out what stuff Mrs. Coggeshall's a-goin' to cover her furniture with,

Prudence by sending her gifts, which she displayed to her village friends with some pride.

"From my brother," she would say, gently lingering on the words.

"Oh, he's only a half brother-in-law, at best!" cried Maggie Stafford, on one such occasion; "and yet he's the only real relative you have in the world."

"I'm sure," broke in Mrs. Warner, sharply, "Prue's folks think just as much of her as anybody's else's folks do of them."

Maggie was a young married woman, struggling for an assured position among the good-natured village aristocracy, who were easily induced to open their doors part way for her. They criticised her a good deal, but tolerated and even rather liked her, both women and men feeling the charm of her unusual beauty.

On this afternoon of which we have spoken, when Prudence had at last finished arraying herself, she went down-stairs, and met Mr. Warner bustling into the sitting-room.

"Where's mother?" asked he.

"There she comes, up the street," answered Janet, the pretty handmaid, flinging open the porch door. Prue stepped to the threshold, and saw her mother approaching. She was an elderly woman, tall and spare, with thin, high features, which were shaded by a silk sun-bon-

net and a green veil tied over her forehead. Spectacles, also green, garnished her nose. She wore a black silk gown, and with her gloveless hands pushed forward a doll baby-carriage, in which were laid several packages.

"There!" cried Mrs. Warner, as she came up the steps, a moment later. "Janet never told me till just now we was out of lump sugar, and I up an' bundled off after it; and I thought I might as well lay in some rice and tapioca at the same time. I knew, with all my years, I could get it quicker 'n Janet, not being so much interested in the young man in the store. That's where my years are a real help to me."

Prue, stooping, shook some dust from Mrs. Warner's skirt.

"Marm's all ready in the parlor," said she. "Come and see how nice she looks. But, oh, mother, don't forget that Janet will take the teacups from you to pass!"

"I won't let her forget," pertly quoth the maid.

"Come, come," commented Mr. Warner; "you talk as if mother was a child."

Several ladies were now seen coming to the front door, and the family went into the parlor to receive them. They clustered around "Marm," Mrs. Warner's aged mother, who sat with calmly folded hands.

"Ninety-five to-day," said her son-in-law, "and she don't look a bit over eighty."

"Oh," quavered the old lady, "but I don't feel nigh so spry as when I was on'y ninety. I did n't think I 'd live to see this day."

"That 's so," said her daughter. "Mother 's just been bent on dyin' all this spring. Did n't want me to make up this dress for her, for fear she would n't wear it. But I was bound she should have it, anyhow."

"It 'll do beautiful to be laid out in," said Marm, smoothing its shining folds. "Dear, dear me, Arvilly, what a time it is sence I was to a funeral!"

The ladies drew out their fancy work. Maggie Stafford sat down by the last gift Darius Kingman had sent, a lovely cabinet, that Prue had transformed into a writing desk. She was not in the habit of writing much, but it had pleased her fancy to make the pretty, curious structure serve as a sort of shrine for the unused literary implements belonging to the family.

"This is very nice, I 'm sure," said Maggie, passing her fingers over the inlaid surface. "It must be very convenient. I suppose, Mrs. Warner, you 're such an intellectual person, you write and compose a great deal."

"Not I," said the matron, with a toss of her head. "I thank the Lord I can use my meas-

uring tape on myself as true as on anybody else, and I know too much to waste my time a-writing things I would n't take the minutes to read if somebody else had written them."

"How Maggie always does rub mother the wrong way!" mused Prue, with a quiet smile; and then, on some pretext, she stepped to the door and looked out across the road. The level sunbeams shone into her eyes, under the flower-laden boughs of apple-trees. A tiny bird, all brown and yellow, swayed on some frail support among the grasses. The grass itself shimmered in the warm, low light, and pink apple-buds seemed to pale visibly into white blossoms, their blushes dying as they grew used to the kisses of the sun.

How lovely it all was! Prudence turned her eyes, and saw a man walking up the road beside the orchard wall. She gave an amazed little cry, started eagerly forward, checked herself, stood a moment irresolute, then advanced slowly to the gate, and when the stranger came up she put out her hand, and he took it, before either spoke.

"You must be Prudence," he said at last. "Do you know me?"

"Yes, Darius."

They went into the house together.

"Good land!" cried Mrs. Warner. "You don't mean it! Darius Kingman, as I live!"

"Come here, come here," said Marm, in a high tone. "I'm 'most blind, an' I want to see if it's really him."

Everybody talked, and laughed, and exclaimed, while Kingman stood looking down at the aged woman, — everybody but Prue, who kept very silent, watching Darius with shy, glad eyes.

Kingman spoke very deferentially to the old lady. He might well have smiled to see her. Around her withered throat she wore a black ribbon, on her head a cap made of cheap black and white laces, mixed with lavender ribbon, and round her head was tied, with long ends, a bright green string, which held on her spectacles. Down each of her temples were laid six little locks of gray hair, shaped like button-hooks. After Darius and Prue became intimate, she confided to him the information that those gray locks were cut more than twenty years before from Marm's dead husband's brow. After the lapse of some time, the widow had had them made up into their present ornamental shape, and now wore them bound on to her forehead under her cap.

The husbands of Mrs. Warner's guests arrived a few minutes after Kingman, and then all the questions and welcoming uproar began again, till everybody learned that one of the

gentlemen, Mr. Coggeshall, who was related to Darius, had had some communication with him, and knew of his intended return. It did not transpire that evening, but in the course of a few days the whole village learned that the traveler had come to help Mr. Coggeshall in the management of a new factory.

Amid the hubbub around Marm's chair, Janet's clear voice was heard saying that supper was ready. During the progress of that meal, Mrs. Warner became so absorbed in telling Maggie Stafford, what every one else at the table knew, about the china that came into her own family when one of her uncles married "a real, foreign-born French woman," that she forgot to give the cups of tea to Janet, and started them herself on uncertain journeys from hand to hand around the table. The maid pursed up her lips and unpursed them, balanced her waiter uncertainly for a moment, then tapped her mistress on the shoulder, whispering fiercely, "Give it to me, ma'am," and seized a cup from the absent-minded matron, which she bore triumphantly to Mr. Kingman; while Mrs. Coggeshall made some remark about the Russian tea she had drank in Europe, and Maggie Stafford silently wished that she also were a connoisseur in teas.

A few evenings later, as Prudence was weed-

ing her flower bed, Darius came into the garden, and strolled up to her. She flushed slightly, holding out her soiled hands with an apologetic gesture of exhibition.

"Never mind," said he. "I saw a pump in the field as I came through. I am sure you can find water enough to make them clean."

"Oh, yes," she answered, feeling a little confused, — "in the meadow. That's where they water the cows."

He laughed, threw himself on the grass, and stared up at the apple blossoms.

"How unlike China!" he said at last.

"It must all seem strange to you," she ventured, rather timidly.

"Strange," he echoed, "yet so familiar. It is coming back to first principles with a vengeance, to take up life in a New England village, after going round the globe in search of a destiny."

She did not half understand him, but she smiled, and he felt encouraged to go on.

"I feel the spell of old associations already. I am sure I have made my circuit. I have traveled far, but all my paths lead me back to the starting-place."

He plucked the blades of grass under his idle fingers, and played with them for some moments, then broke the silence suddenly: —

"Prudence, will you go with me to the Quaker meeting on Sunday? — First day, I suppose I should say."

She glanced up, surprised. "Yes," he continued dreamily, "the old faith knocks within my heart, where it has always lain hidden, and demands to come out and rule my life again."

She was really a little frightened, as well as much puzzled, at the turn Darius' remarks had taken; but as she knelt there by her flowers, with raised face and perplexed eyes, something in her sympathetic though uncomprehending womanhood stimulated him to reveal his thought more fully to her.

"Do you not know," he said, "that I was born and bred a Friend, but was disowned when I married your sister?"

"Oh, yes," she answered.

"I was in love," he went on, "and what I did I would do again under the same circumstances; but those can never be. And so it has come to pass that I feel the longing of a homesick child to be once more received into membership."

"You do not look like a Quaker," said she.

"Perhaps not; nor do I talk like one," he added, with a smile. "Old-fashioned Quakers never discuss religious matters. Maybe I shall feel no need of speech when I sit among them again."

"It seems odd," murmured the bewildered Prue.

"I suppose it does," he admitted. "But truly, Prue, you can never know how deep the dye of Quakerism is to those whose souls are steeped in it, as an hereditary religion. It is only a veneer of the world I wear upon me. My garments are un-Quakerish in cut, but my thoughts are shaped after the old pattern."

"And will you wear a drab coat?"

He sprang to his feet with a hearty laugh. "I don't know whether the inward impulse will extend so far outward."

He started towards the house, and she followed. The path was more familiar to her, than to him, and yet she felt as if it was he that was guiding her, under the cherry-trees and apple-blossoms, to the door of her home.

It chanced that two or three weeks elapsed before Prudence was able to accompany her brother-in-law to the Quaker meeting. Meanwhile, Darius was very busy, thinking and doing. His business arrangements proceeded rapidly towards completion. He plunged head-long into details, of which some bewildered and some surprised him. In his character, practical energy was united with dreamy speculative-ness. He possessed good abilities as a business man, combined with the mental furnishing that

would have done for a religious enthusiast. Remarkable in neither department of his mind, his thinking was still of an honest, truthful sort, and he had always managed to keep sight of a horizon line beyond the sordid cares or tempting passions of every-day existence. During the years spent in China, his longing for an ideal existence had become intensified into what was almost a passion for a religious life. A homesick feeling mingled with the sentiment, and, uniting itself to the ineradicable impulse that a Quaker breeding gives to the soul, turned his thoughts towards the renewal of his fellowship with the church of his forefathers. Across the drift of this current came the incident of his entrance into a manufacturing business, involving, as it seemed to him, some complexity in his relations with many of his fellow-beings.

Darius Kingman, sickening with disgust at Asiatic life, whose conditions tried his faith in the unity of the human race, had idealized his own country, and he therefore found many things to perplex him when he came suddenly into contact with American industrial forces, and with laborers on American soil. At first he was delighted ; then shocked by some occurrences which left him uncertain whether these painful phenomena were normal or exceptional.

It was a perfect June morning on which Darius drove with Prudence through the sleepy heat to the old Quaker meeting-house. The roads were lined with blackberry and barberry bushes. Locust-trees grew on either side by the stone walls, and were in full bloom, making the air heavy with their sweetness. Wild-grape vines clasped trees, stones, and shrubbery in an abandoned embrace.

Prudence sat erect by Kingman's side, and looked about her with an unwonted brightness in her eyes. He drove on in dreamy silence. The languid air, the wild fragrance, stole into his soul, exciting there a sort of sensuous fervor of religious emotion. When they reached their destination, he lifted Prue out before the worn old meeting-house, and idly suffered his eyes to rest upon her figure as she mounted the steps. Her bonnet was simple, and she was clad in a muslin gown, the prevailing tint of which was gray, so that she did not look unfit to sit among Quaker women. He fastened his horse in the shed, whose yawning alcoves had sheltered the teams of more than one sober generation of meeting-goers, and then made his way into the little assembly. The memories of his boyhood came over him, as he took his seat apart from Prue, on the "men's side" of the room. He fixed his eyes on the elders sitting on the

"facing seats." Softly came the sound of summer noises through the windows. The moments went by like solemn heart-beats. The faces of the congregation were settled into stolid calm, but Darius felt as if he were waiting for something to happen. A woman rose, at last, and laid her bonnet on the bench beside her. She began to speak in a low voice, which soon soared into the well-known Quaker chant. Her sentences were disconnected, ungrammatical, and uncertain of significance; but Darius could not judge this utterance as he would have judged it if delivered in another tone and place. Religious feeling and truth were linked too closely with such sounds, through all the experience of early life.

A small, sharp-featured man arose next. Plain as his face was, it had a look of tenderness, and his homely eyes were very earnest. His words, uttered simply, and with but little intonation, were direct. He spoke of God as if he were sure of him. "Men are slow," he said, "really to believe there is a God in this world. They believe in many other powers, but not in his. They are slow to think he is working right here. Yet he made men so that they need him. Man is higher than all the other creatures God has made, but he needs God more than these lower ones do. If we are

not in unity with God, we cannot live right lives, so it behooves us all to watch carefully what passes within us, to see that we be in unity with him. For thus much he has left it to us to do, that we should not be mere puppets; we must try to put ourselves into communion with him, if we want his help. If there be any who say they cannot see God, or understand him, amid the sore provings of trouble and sorrow and pain that are laid upon them, verily, it is because they have themselves closed their eyes and darkened their minds to perceive him not."

Thus spoke the old man, with an accent of every-day in his voice, and it seemed to Darius that this was what he had waited for, — the speech of a man who really believed in God.

Some days after this Sunday, Darius, walking home in the late afternoon, saw Prue coming out of one of the factory tenements, where he knew some consumptive invalids lived. She carried a little covered basket on her arm, and wore her gray muslin.

"You have been to see poor Andrews," he said, joining her. "He tells me you have been there before."

"Oh, yes."

"You look like a sister of charity."

"Do I? But I do not make a business of doing good."

"Perhaps you are good enough without making a business of it. Some of us have to treat it as a very serious occupation indeed, in order to succeed much in it," he said, slowly, as they walked, treading the flickering shadows of the willow boughs that drooped above their heads.

"How came you to take up visiting the poor?" he inquired.

"I didn't take it up," she said, somewhat confusedly. "I never knew anything about such people, till Mr. Coggeshall built these houses by the river; and then we had a wash-woman from one of the families, and I went there once when the cellar was flooded; and so I kept on going, they were so near."

"These people were your neighbors, in short," said he, looking at her gently, "and so you treated them with neighborly kindness. Well, my dear, I am not sure that searching through all the universe will find me a better gospel than that of neighborliness,—if we only see clearly how large our neighborhood is."

He fell to wondering what would be the efficacy of the Golden Rule as an economic principle; but she, still walking by his side, scarcely heard the happy chirping of the birds above them, her heart was throbbing so because he had called her his dear.

Maggie Stafford met them thus, and glanced curiously at their faces.

"At her age!" thought the young married beauty.

A few minutes later, she was sitting on Mrs. Coggeshall's portico, saying, "Upon my word, I do think the English way is better. Then a girl in Prudence's position would know at once there could be no love-making between her and her brother-in-law, and so would n't get her mind set in that direction."

Mrs. Coggeshall looked blandly at her visitor. "Oh, indeed," she said, "have you leanings towards the English Church? Well, I always did like the service very much, and I have read a good deal about the Anglican division from Rome with great interest. If you are thinking about these things, I should be delighted to lend you several theological works which I possess. Mr. Coggeshall always laughs at what he calls my 'pious library.' I confess, however, I never could quite make up my mind to turn Episcopalian. It was the fault of the English people. They are responsible themselves for my remaining outside their communion. I always doted on everything English till the war came, and then they were so nasty, as they say, I never could abide them afterwards. Do you remember much about the war?"

"Yes, though I was quite young then," said Maggie; and bent on returning to the charge, she added, "I think it very odd Mr. Kingman did not come back from China to go into the army."

"Brought up a Quaker, my dear," rejoined Mrs. Coggeshall, thoroughly aware of Maggie's purpose, and equally resolved to frustrate it. "You know Quakers don't fight; and though many of the young men in the Society did go into the army, they were those who were in the very heat of the martial spirit of the North, and caught the war fever without stopping to think of the principles of their religion. But Darius was way off in China, and only echoes reached his ear; positively, only echoes of the strife. It was n't exactly 'distance lending enchantment to the view,' but something analogous to it. The excitement did not overcome the effect of a lifelong training. He sympathized, and all that, but could not take the bloody sword in hand. Oh, I respect his devotion to principle just as much as I honor the courage of our soldiers! I knew several of those Quaker officers from Philadelphia. Splendid fellows! Come into the house, Maggie, and let me show you a photograph of one of them. Such a gentleman and soldier as he was! And to think he is dead! Yet I've got to that age that some-

times it seems to me as if half the world were dead, and it was n't natural for me to have any friends alive."

So she talked the young woman's gossip down, but she understood it very well, and began herself to fear that Prue might be laying up trouble for her poor little heart.

Maggie, meanwhile, rushed into the game, and often invited Darius to visit her. She had no special desire to assume the *rôle* of married flirt. Her ambition was to have a popular house, and to move about in it with impartial smiles. Darius took Prudence with him a few times. She sat in the corner, very composed and very quiet. He did not quite like the company he met there, and it relieved an occasional feeling of annoyance for him to see Prue on her low seat by the window.

"Am I not glad that is over!" he said one night, as they started for home. "I would not go there so much if Mrs. Stafford did n't manage it so that I seem obliged to. I don't think it is consistent with my Quaker principles to frequent such gay assemblies."

"I can't quite make out," said Prue, "how much in earnest you are about your Quakerism."

"I am very much in earnest," answered he. "Do you not think a simple style of living, on

the part of the rich, might have a tendency to bring about a keener sense of the brotherhood of men?"

There was no reply to this remark, because just then a turn in the road brought them out of the dense shadow of trees, and there, displayed before them, was the sky all in a pallid flame with dancing Northern Lights.

After this evening, Darius generally succeeded in escaping or refusing Maggie's invitations. That pretty lady pouted, pretended to be grieved, and finally gave a little revengeful thrust: —

"I suppose a poor married woman like me must give up your friendship, now you are so much interested in another quarter. Oh, I know: I ought to retire to my kitchen, and leave the parlor for the 'young folks,' or only come there to sit by the wall and watch them enjoy themselves. But I don't like to do that very well," she added, demurely folding her hands and dropping her lovely eyes, "when the only reason I am not one of the 'young folks' myself is that I am married, not that I am old. I am really not near so old as some people I know. And truly, I don't see why I can't like fun and my friends just as well as if I did n't — like somebody ever so much better, and belong to him, — in a general way. And why can't you, Mr. Kingman? Is she jealous?"

"I don't know what you mean," said he stoutly.

"Oh, but she does," retorted Maggie, looking prettier than ever, for audacity was becoming to her. "Or is it only a case of somebody liking you best? Then surely you might come to my little parties. Oh, there's my good man! Tom, dear, don't you see me? Here I am, quarreling with Mr. Kingman. Come over and walk home with me, for, truly, he won't."

That evening there was a temperance meeting in the village, and all the aristocracy of the place attended, by way of setting a good example to the lower classes. Mrs. Coggeshall, looking across the aisle, saw Prue's eyes resting for an instant on Darius.

"Ah," thought the matron, "Providence evidently intends this to be a case for me. Prudence has no flesh-and-blood mother, and the best make-believe one don't thrill through every nerve on behalf of a child, as a real one does. I have n't an idea Mrs. Warner sees a thing of what's going on under her respectably spectacled nose. To be sure, Prue is old enough to take care of herself; only women, unless they are married, will be women to the end of the chapter, poor creatures! Gracious, how time goes! It must be full fifteen years since Prue followed that Lorenzo somebody down to the

river. She thought she was doing it to please the Lord, but I guess the Lord knew very well it was done to please Lorenzo. And now she's on the road to another trouble!"

That night Darius Kingman sat, for an hour, alone on his boarding-house piazza. The moon shone solemnly down out of a clear, dark sky. There seemed to be no barrier between the man's soul and heaven, — only immeasurable distance. All the passions of his life passed in review before him, like a great host marshaled under that awful sky. Events were of little moment to him compared with emotions. He was convinced that it had not mattered much what special circumstance had fired the train of feeling laid ready in his heart, or had turned his thoughts along a pathway already open before him. If it had not been one incident, it would have been another. Only one thing in all his life appeared now to have been of itself of controlling import, — his early love and loss. Apart from this single monumental experience, all his story was the story of a man's longing after God, and all that longing had brought him back to the faith of his youth. Amid the fluctuations of modern thought, with its materialistic trend, this alone offered a solid assurance to his mind, — the dear old Quaker doctrine, that in the soul of every man that cometh

into the world is a light that lighteth all his footsteps. A thousand lesser impulses, also, drew him back to his old religion. For the sake of his love he had once defied the Quaker discipline, which forbade marriage with an outsider; but did he wish to do that again? Prudence, sweet as she was to him, aroused no such passionate love as had been given to her sister. He knew very well that old customs had so far relaxed among the Friends in that section of the country that he could be admitted to fellowship with them, though it were known that he purposed marrying one of the women of the world a week later. He had no principle himself against such marriages, and yet, whether from the effect of early training or hereditary prejudice, he shrank from entertaining at the same time the project of joining the Society and of making such a marriage as the Society had deliberately condemned as "disorderly."

It also touched what small sense of humor this serious-minded man possessed to find himself, in this religious crisis of his life, tempted to commit again the very offense which had made him a religious outlaw, so many years before. But when he had reached this stage of his meditations, he told himself that he was not at all tempted to marry Prue. Why, then, was he thinking about it? Why did her face

rise before him in the moonlight, beside the radiant image of that dead girl, whose remembered beauty made the living Prudence seem the ghost to him?

The truth was, Maggie Stafford's hints had rankled in Darius' mind, and, moreover, Mrs. Coggeshall had claimed his escort home that evening, and plainly told him that if he did not mean to marry Prue he would do well not to dangle around her any more. Mrs. Coggeshall could be very direct of speech when she chose, and she had left no doubt as to her meaning in his mind.

"I do not believe it," he soliloquized. "Prue is not the girl to fall in love with any man; nor am I exactly a charming creature. I will not go there to make talk, but there is surely no need for me to think of marrying her on her own account! What an idea! As for myself, I like her. I really do not know why I like her so much. Sometimes, I wonder if she has any intellect, or only that sweet, sympathetic smile, which always leads me on to talk. She never says a noticeable thing, yet I always want to tell her all I think. But I surely do not love her, or I could not analyze her thus."

It did not occur to the man that he was not analyzing her very successfully just then, — that he was simply confessing there was some

quality in her which defied his analysis; so he went on bravely to his resolve, to shield her from gossip, and visit her only when compelled to do so. He rose at last to leave the silent porch. Pausing at the house door, he looked up at the moon, which now rode majestic in the mid-heavens. Back over his soul came a religious feeling, like the swelling of a great tide.

"O God, my God," he murmured, "in all this aching, groaning world, in all this living, loving world, there is no room for any passion but the desire of thee!"

So evening after evening passed, and Darius did not come to Prue's sitting-room. At first she wondered openly at his absence, playfully making little vexed speeches about it to her father and mother. Then she ceased to refer to her brother-in-law, and drooped a little, and was rather silent, but there was nobody to notice that.

One afternoon she sat at the window, and saw Darius go by, on the other side of the road, with Maggie Stafford and her younger sister, Tessy, — a girl more golden-haired, more beautifully blonde even, than Maggie. Tessy was laughing as they passed. The laugh sounded like the note of a bobolink, Prue thought; and,

thinking this, she saw Darius smile kindly in answer. How well she knew that kind smile!

She rose at once, and went to her room. She saw herself in her mirror, as the door closed behind her, and seated herself mechanically in a low chair. How old and pale she looked!

"Old!" she said to herself mockingly. "I feel as if I were dead!"

For a full half hour she sat there, scarcely moving; then she went calmly down the stairs, took up her sewing, and listened, without understanding, while her mother read aloud to her something from Darwin.

That same evening, Darius stood once more on Maggie's piazza, while the music of young voices floated gayly through the open windows; and she herself, a white, graceful figure, came to him, laying a hand lightly on his arm.

"It is lovely to have you back," said she; "and I knew you would like Tessy."

"She is charming," said the man. "But I am not in my element among these bright young girls. I fancy I lived too long in China to be at home in this sort of society. I spoke pigeon English too many years to find my tongue apt at compliments now. You are very kind to want to introduce me to your girl friends, but it is too late for me to make myself their comrade."

After this, he did manage very nearly to seclude himself; and, being much occupied by his business during the fall months, Prue was not the only one of his friends who missed the sight of him.

Of course he was obliged to call occasionally at Mr. Warner's, but it was at least three weeks after that evening at Maggie's when Prue met him first. She came into the house from a botanizing walk, carrying in her hand a spray of early red leaves. On her way home she had been thinking of him. She was always thinking of him at this time. She never left the house without the thought that she might see him. She never came back without the hope that he had entered her home in her absence. She never approached a window without wondering if she might not catch a glimpse of him through the revealing glass, that seemed a loophole in her prison walls. She never saw a figure coming towards her from the distance without the prayer that it might be his. It was not a sharp pain she felt, but a deathly suspense of the mind, a slow-creeping faintness of the heart, like the on-coming of disease or of old age.

In this mood, with his name trembling on her unconscious lips, she came into the room on that September afternoon, and saw him standing beside her grandmother, — her grandmother only

by adoption, like all her other relatives, poor Prue!

He was saying gentle parting words to the old lady, who peered up at him, nodding her head, till the little false curls bobbed in a manner quite unbecoming their melancholy origin.

"Yes, yes, Darius Kingman," said the shrill voice; "we old folks expect you young ones to forget us. I ain't been a mite surprised you did n't come, but it did seem rather more lonesomer. I set here an' think an' think, an' your Mary's pretty face rises right up afore me like a picter! She come here a-visitin' oncet or twicet, when she was a tiny tot; an' I declare for 't, though Prue was a better gal, I did like your Mary best. I set a sight by Prue, but my heart kinder hankered after Mary. She was like my little gal that died; an' when you come it brings the thought of them both to me, — pretty little gals, your Mary, as has been dead only thirteen year, an' my Arabella, as died sixty year ago. Wal, wal, I allus see 'em together now, an' pretty soon I'm goin' where they be. I think I can find 'em somewheres, — I *think* I can."

As the old lady's voice died away in an unearthly whisper, Darius turned, and saw Prue, very pale, standing before him, holding the spray of red leaves against her gray gown. He

felt a sort of nervous shock, but he only bowed, touched her fingers, stooped again over Marm's withered hand, murmured a few incoherent words, and left the house.

A few days later, the grandmother died, and Darius came again frequently to the Warners'. He was kind and helpful, but he kept out of Prue's way, and when the necessity for visiting passed he came no more.

The Warners did not put on mourning. "It's a sinful waste of time an' money," said Mrs. Arvilla. "It makes the world dismaler than it need be, an' there's nothin' Christian in doin' that. The sorrow that has to be coddled to keep it alive had better die. If anybody thinks I ain't sorry my mother's dead, let 'em come an' ask me! That's all."

So Prue still wore her soft grays and browns; but when she selected her modest winter wardrobe, that year, she chose even plainer shapes and duller tints than ever before; feeling not only that thus she did some slight honor to the aged woman's memory, but further impelled by a sense that in this way it behooved one to dress whose girlhood had passed. She did not want to be old, but she had felt that she was old ever since the afternoon when she had heard that clear laugh of Tessy Martin's ring out for girlish joy at being in Darius King-

man's company. A man's fate, thought Prue, was different from a woman's. He was her own senior by several years, but he was not old in the sense that she was. He was still a welcome associate for young and beautiful maidens, while she! — alas, what handsome boy of eighteen would laugh like *that* because Prudence Warner smiled on him? She had not only missed Darius Kingman's love, — a something which she had never possessed, — but she had lost that which had once been hers, — all the blessed opportunity of youth. She bade herself accept her lot quietly, not trick herself out in unbecoming clothes, but be willing to look what she was, — a middle-aged single woman, who had been passed by:

The first time she wore her new garments to church, Maggie came up to her after the service, laughing. "Really, Prudence, you look just like a Quaker. Have you caught Darius Kingman's craze?"

Prue flushed, and turned angrily away.

"Oh, I did n't mean anything," called out Maggie; but the other would not answer, and walked rapidly homeward.

Prue was tempted, after this, to crown her bonnet with gay flowers, but she would not show Maggie that she felt the sting of what had been said.

Towards spring, the hands in Mr. Coggeshall's mill struck. They paraded and held meetings. There was much gathering of people on the streets. All sorts of stories were told about everybody concerned in the business. Mr. Coggeshall, irritated by many false reports, shut himself in his house in sullen silence. Deputations of spinners and weavers besieged his door in vain. He would see none of them. Mrs. Coggeshall rattled on good-humoredly about the whole affair, and rallied her husband unceasingly at what she termed the constantly increasing evidences of his popularity with the people he employed. She treated it all as a joke, but he took the strike as a personal offense.

It was a new experience to Kingman, and impressed him deeply. He talked with people holding all sorts of opinions, and people who were affected in many different ways, by the questions at issue. By turns he grew indignant in behalf of all parties. Sometimes he was heart-sick and dismayed by the difficulties in this and many kindred situations which he investigated; but whatever financial theories he adopted or rejected, more and more his sympathies went out to those men, women, and children to whom "labor troubles" meant something worse than the pecuniary embarrassment which threatened their employers.

Prudence saw him now frequently, as business consultations were often held with Mr. Warner at their house.

She did not understand political economy, and perhaps would not have been much impressed by the talk between her father and Mr. Coggeshall about "competition" if she had understood it; but she noted Darius' serious aspect, felt that he was not quite in sympathy with the others, and yearned towards him.

"He seems to mind people's troubles as if they were his own," she thought. "I suppose we all ought to," she added, with the simple comment of a conscience unversed in the *laissez-faire* doctrines of trade.

One Sunday in March, Mr. and Mrs. Coggeshall came to Mr. Warner's, soon after the dinner which it was the village Sabbath custom to have in the middle of the afternoon. The talk turned on Kingman's character.

"Now," said Mrs. Coggeshall, "you may say what you will, but *I* say there's something very fine about that man. With all his Quaker stiffness, if I wanted to draw a picture of an ideal gentleman, I'd just make his portrait."

"A good fellow, a good fellow," commented her husband sagely, "but very erratic, very erratic;" and he puckered his lips, as if he did not like the taste of that word.

"Yes," said she undauntedly, "awfully so; that's one thing I like about him."

"I don't see," spoke up Mrs. Warner, "as the thing you call so erratic in Darius is anything but the New Testament fanaticism put in action; an' for my part, I don't think it's respectful to the Lord, the way Mr. Coggeshall and Mr. Warner are always talkin', as if the Almighty did n't know about business, when He settled his system of morality."

"My dear, my dear," softly interposed Mr. Warner, "you be a woman, and don't understand business."

"The Lord an' me together!" ejaculated Mrs. Arvilla.

At that moment came a low tap at the back door, and Prudence softly glided out of the room. She soon came back, and spoke with some nervousness:

"Father, Darius wants to know if he may borrow the horse and buggy to drive to Lexville. His horse is lame. He's got a sudden call to go, and as he may be detained he's asked me to go with him, so I can bring the horse back."

"Oh, to be sure, to be sure," bustled Mr. Warner, rising. "I'll go and see to the harnessing."

"No, you need n't," said she hastily. "I

guess Darius understands a horse as well as you do, — the times he's harnessed Spin! Sit still, do! You know you've got a lame back, and, besides, Mr. Coggeshall wants to talk business with you."

"That's so," said the manufacturer, as Prue, despite herself, turned an appealing look to him. "Sit down, Jacob. I guess Darius is equal to the occasion."

But Mrs. Coggeshall noticed Prue's excited manner and disapproved very much of the proposed drive. She wanted to go straight out to the barn, and talk to Kingman again about his sister-in-law's affections. She ached to tell Mrs. Warner how stupidly blind she was. But as she could do neither of these things, she tried to content herself by attacking Prudence's unsuspicious mother on a point of theology.

When Prue, all bonneted and cloaked, went out to the barn, she found Darius standing beside the mare, his face very white and his lips compressed.

"I'll harness her," said she, "and I've made it all right in the house."

"Poor little Prue," said he. "What a diplomat you must be, and I should never have suspected it of you!"

She put the mare in the traces, backed the buggy out of the barn, and helped Darius in.

He submitted with a protest, but when both were seated he gathered up the reins with his left hand.

"You'd better let me drive," said she.

"Not till we have passed the house," he answered.

They leaned forward and bowed as they went by the sitting-room windows, and then Darius laughed a little, for Mrs. Coggeshall darted at him a wrathful look, the purport of which he suspected.

When they were on the road Prue firmly took possession of the reins, saying, "Now tell me all about it."

"I have told you all there is, — just a row with Tom Murphy and Peter McNamara, as I came across the fields, looking for trailing arbutus. It was nothing. They would n't have touched me, but they were drunk, and took it into their muddled heads to class me among their oppressors. There's no real ill-blood among the strikers. They've behaved very well, I think," he added, with an attempt at a smile, "considering they've had to do without the refining influences of higher education."

"Oh, but are you hurt very much?"

"Not seriously; only, as I said, my arm must be broken. I think Peter did it with that big club. It did look so big, coming down

on me, and I put up my arm. But I got off in decently honorable shape, I flatter myself, — Quaker as I am. I want to get to Lexville without any one hearing of it. I wouldn't have Mr. Coggeshall know it to-night for the world, because — it can do no harm to tell you — he has agreed to give notice to-morrow that he will accede to some of the demands of the strikers. It is right he should do so; but if he were to hear of this affair first, he would certainly misinterpret it, and jump to the conclusion that it was an act of deliberate hostility, and I am afraid he would refuse to do what he has promised to do."

Kingman spoke slowly, and leaned heavily against the side of the buggy, looking faint. Prudence drove steadily, keeping her eyes fixed on the mare. The sky was darkly overcast, except around the horizon, where bits of blue showed between fleecy drifts, and in the west a glory of many colors, soft yet bright, spread itself above the distant hills. Here and there the sun behind the clouds poured its rays down, straight and luminous, across this belt of opaline tints, melting gold into a dream of rose-color, and lower still dissolving all elements in an enchanting haze, which lay upon those wonderful hills of mysterious blue.

Prue drove directly to Dr. Salisbury's house,

when they reached Lexville. The doctor received them in his office. He knew Prue slightly, and held out to her a thin brown hand, working his features, while he made a speech of formal welcome. She briefly explained her presence, and he cried out delightedly, —

"And you want to make a conspirator of me, and let me secrete Kingman for twenty-four hours, till the affair has blown over! I see, I see. He shall stay here. I'll keep him in my own house, and doctor him privately. I like it! It carries me back to my youth, and reminds me of the fugitive slaves my father hid in his cellar."

While he talked and ogled, the doctor placed his patient on the sofa, and prepared to examine his injuries. Then said Prudence, who had remained standing in the middle of the floor, —

"Now I will leave you, Darius."

Kingman feebly smiled, and held up to her his left hand. As she took it she saw her sister's wedding ring on his finger.

"You have been very good," he said. "Some day, I'll try to thank you."

She made him no answer, but bade the doctor good-by, and left them together.

"She's a woman, now," said the surgeon, as he threw a puckered glance after her. Darius

raised himself slightly, stared at the doctor, but uttered no word.

The secret was kept till Mr. Coggeshall was too deeply pledged to conciliation to permit of his drawing back. When the story did leak out it enhanced Kingman's popularity very considerably. Murphy disappeared from town, but McNamara made a pilgrimage to Lexville, procured an interview with Darius, and behaved after such a fashion of sincere regret that the wounded man became the young fellow's staunch friend.

Kingman was, however, quite ill for several days. Dr. Salisbury consequently formed a habit of going to Mr. Warner's to report the daily fluctuations in the condition of his "sequestered hero," as he called the patient.

"He'd be tol'ably good-looking," said Mrs. Warner one day, as she watched the physician carefully tying his horse at the gate, "if he'd only let his face alone, an' not try to keep his features promenading round his countenance. He ain't so very old, neither. They say his hair turned white when his wife died. I don't believe he's a day over fifty. I say, Prue," with a prolonged but feminine whistle, "*that's* why he's so fond of comin' here."

"What's why?" asked Prue, incoherently; but her mother only snorted forth a laugh, and

retreated to the kitchen, unkindly leaving Prue alone to receive the doctor. The matron sat down by the stove, and tittered over the boiling cabbage and corned beef.

"To think," murmured she, "of anybody's wantin' our Prue!"

Prudence met the doctor with flaming cheeks, which made her almost handsome, so that his ardor was fired; and although he did not actually make love to her, something in his manner left her convinced, when he finally bowed himself away, that under all the play of his hands, and the twisting and screwing of eyes and mouth, lurked a definite intention towards herself.

When alone, she laughed, like her mother, and echoed her thought, saying, "The idea of his wanting me! Why, it's ten years since any one wanted me. He's a nice man, too, and the last one was *such* a fool!"

But after she had stood still a minute, laughing in a helpless, hysterical fashion, she suddenly fled to her room, as she had done the afternoon she had seen Darius walking with Maggie and Tessy. This time she threw herself on the floor, and cried, and cried.

Nevertheless, the knowledge that she had or could have a suitor proved in many ways a balm to Prue's heart; and finally, rising from

the floor, she took from a box a spring hat, and deliberately garnished it with a modest spray of flowers, which she had laid aside when her self-crucifying mood had been strong upon her. She had no idea of trying to be a girl again, or of marrying any one; but she did not feel half so much like an irredeemable old maid as she had felt for many months.

Dr. Salisbury reported to his patient the visits he made to the Warners, and Darius responded that he was glad to hear they were well.

He grew very restless in his confinement, and made attempts to vary the monotony of his life in ways that retarded his recovery. The doctor fretted at him.

"I told Mrs. Warner, this morning, that you were worse than a whole circus to manage."

"How do you know? Did you ever try to manage a circus?"

"Kingman, why don't you say *thee* to me?"

"I don't want to."

The doctor laughed at Darius' irritation. "I guess I'll have you all right soon," he said; "but you must be patient, and not do such abominably rash things. Have prudence, Kingman, — have prudence."

Darius rose to his feet, and looked at the physician a moment, before he said quietly, "I have been a fool, doctor, and I *will* have prudence."

But when he was alone, he took from his drawer a little velvet case, and opening, looked in it, long and wistfully. His heart was full of very pure emotion, and yet it almost seemed to him as if he were withdrawing himself from the sphere of some dear and holy influence. He had arrived at one of those crises when the soul is simultaneously possessed by feelings and impulses which, tested by any temporal standard, are absolutely inconsistent, the one with the other. At such times a man is both constant and inconstant, desiring that from which he shrinks. He longs for one woman, and notwithstanding that longing he would, if he could, fling his immortal being down before the memory of another. The contradictory passions which swayed Kingman mocked his reason, with their suggestion of the pitiful futility of all search into the mysteries of human existence. Yet even at that moment, his spirit, like that of many men who have had experience kindred to his, indignantly protested that it would forever interrogate the secrets of its agitation and its destiny.

"God forgive me," he murmured at last, "and Mary forgive me too, for I do not know whether I am less or more worthy, since I have come to care for this other."

With a sigh he closed the little case, and it

seemed to him that he shut therein his youth and a life-long question.

The buds upon the trees were swollen just enough to blur the outline of the branches against the sky, and the air felt warm to Kingman's cheek, as he made his way to the side door of Mr. Warner's house, the first time he went there after his accident. The grass was pushing up its elf-like blades, sheathed in green, and the voices of children came calling through the distance with a shrill sweetness. The world looked happy, and Darius felt so as Prudence came through the yard to meet him, with welcoming eyes. She had been feeding some pet pigeons, and a dove was perched upon her shoulder, — a young bird, pure white and exquisitely slender. It looked not like a creature, but like the soul of some being.

Darius bent over the woman's hand, and the dove took flight, its wings whirring close above his head. When he raised his eyes he saw Dr. Salisbury standing in a familiar attitude in the doorway. It seemed to Darius that a shadow had fallen across the sky.

They all went round to the front porch, where they seated themselves, and chatted lightly about the wonderful warmth of the afternoon.

The doctor was fluent. Kingman grew silent. Prudence sat quietly between the two men.

"I'm like Gertrude," she thought: "having got one sweetheart, *they swarm*."

But she did not really think that Darius had come a-wooing. She only felt very glad to see him, and very content, also, that her womanly attractions should be vindicated in his presence by the doctor's attentive manner.

"I want a glass of water!" cried Kingman, at last, springing to his feet in helpless impatience.

Prudence rose. "No," said he, "I am going to the well."

"You can't draw the bucket."

"I'll help you," said the doctor.

"I can do it myself," retorted he. They followed him, nevertheless, and the doctor applied himself to the well-rope, while Darius stood by, fuming. Prue went into the house for a glass. As she came out again, the white dove flew down and hovered about her. The doctor was hauling up the bucket. Darius went forward and met Prue. He looked her straight in the eyes, and said in a low tone, —

"Choose between that man and me."

"Where's your tumbler?" cried the doctor, as he landed the dripping bucket. Prue filled the glass, and handed it to Darius. The doctor

stood only a yard away, whisking some drops of water off his clothes, but his back was turned.

"Which is it?" asked Kingman, over the glass.

"Why, you, Darius, of course," said she.

AND JOE.



L.

THEODORA JUSTICE sat, with a wearily comfortable air, before an open fire in the sitting-room of her friend, Margaret Denton, M. D.

"The worst of it is, I have lost my ambitions," said Theodora. "I used to have such fine dreams." She laughed a little. "I meant to do a few things for the amusement of other people, and a great many for my own pleasure. This morning I came across a plan I drew last year for a Gothic library. I also found a programme I made at the same time for a series of literary and musical entertainments, and a list of guests to be invited from New York and Boston. With this paper was another; and what do you suppose that was? A set of colored designs I had drawn for pre-Raphaelite costumes wherewith to adorn my own person. They were quite pretty, too, though you 'll find that hard to believe; but I don't care for

them now, nor for the library, nor the parties."

The smile was dreary with which she looked up for an answer, but before her friend could speak there was a knock at the door, and a servant came in to say "Ann Reilly was very bad," and wanted the doctor.

"Let me go with you," said Theodora.

"Certainly," answered Margaret; "but it is not a pleasant sight you will see."

Miss Justice was the daughter of the manufacturer who owned the larger portion of the factories and houses of the town, but she knew nothing about the people whom she visited with Margaret that night. It was the first time she had ever been in any of their homes, and all the stirrings of her conscience towards them had hitherto been quieted by a half-formed resolution that some time she would build a Gothic library or found an art gallery for them. Now, with new, vague thoughts, she followed Margaret, who took the occasion to visit several patients. They toiled up dark, narrow stairs. They went down into basements. They found a dying girl's chamber lighted with tapers, and the garment in which she was to be buried lying beside her on the bed. And then they went into a pleasant sitting-room, belonging to a French Canadian family. A carpet was on

the floor, a bright-colored cloth over the table; the chimney shelf was covered with gaudy toys and ornaments. Some flower-pots were on the window sill, and a melodeon stood against the wall. Three or four handsome girls sat in painted wooden chairs and talked eagerly with the doctor.

After leaving this place, Miss Justice and her companion turned towards home, but had gone only a few steps when they came upon a crowd of jeering boys surrounding a lad who sat forlorn and silent upon the sidewalk. A red light from the window of a little oyster shop streamed about them all.

"He had an awful fit this mornin'," said one boy.

"I say, Joe, did you have any dinner to-day?" shouted another, as he turned a somersault that brought him directly in the way of the two ladies as they approached the group.

"What is the matter?" asked Theodora, sternly.

A chorus of voices answered, "He's starvin', he is!"

"Starving! What do you mean? Who is he?"

The boys giggled, and were silent a moment, till a red-headed Irish urchin said, with a grin, "Joe Huckleberry, *we* call him. His mother's

turned him out. I gin him a piece of bread this mornin', an' he sleeps round, in the Company barn an' woodsheds."

"Joe Huckleberry!" repeated Theodora.

"Yes, that's what we call him. Can't say his name right. He's French."

Margaret placed her hand on Joe's shoulder. The boy had remained all this while gazing on the ground, apparently waiting in an uninterested mood for some one to do something with him. He looked up now with a silly smile.

"He has fits," said the Irish boy.

"Awful!" cried another. "I seen him bite the ground, jest like a dog, in one on 'em."

"They comes on anywheres — in the street, or in the mill, jest where he happens to be," added the red-haired youth, confidentially.

"Joe, has your mother turned you out-of-doors?" asked Margaret.

"No," said the boy; "it's my brother-in-law."

"Do you live with your brother-in-law?"

"I did, but he's turned me out."

"What did he do it for?" asked Theodora.

"Dunno," said Joe. "He never liked me, nohow. Could n't bear me afore he married my sister. Half killed me, one day, lickin' me in the street, jest for nothin'. Come across me, an' thought he would, I s'pose."

"When did he turn you out?"

"Night 'fore last."

"And where have you slept?"

"Got in ag'in that night, after they was all asleep, an' went up in the garret an' slep'."

"And last night?"

"Got into the Company barn."

"What have you had to eat?"

"Nothin' much."

"Where is your mother?"

"She lives with my brother-in-law."

"Did she want you turned out?"

"No. She gin me some bread yesterday an' this mornin'."

"Is she kind to you?"

"Yes."

"Is your sister kind?"

"Yes."

"Then what is the matter?"

"Dunno."

"Do you work in the mill?"

"I did. I worked up to Slade's; but my father come away from there, an' lef' me, an' then I was turned off, an' I come down here."

"Oh, you have a father? Where is he now?"

"He's at my brother-in-law's."

"Did he want you sent out into the street?"

"He said I might as well be."

"Why don't you try to get work in the mill here?"

"I don't think they 'd give me none."

"Why not?"

"I 've worked here afore."

Theodora smiled at this ingenuous confession, but said gently, "Come with me, and I 'll see that you are taken care of to-night."

Joe rose, and stood slouching at the lady's side, while she said to the Irish urchin, "Will you go and tell Joe's mother and his sister's husband that I want them to come up and see me this evening, if possible?"

"Dunno who you be," said the boy, promptly.

Theodora felt slightly ashamed to find herself a stranger to these boys, but was relieved when two voices whispered loudly, "It's Miss Justice," and the youngster, thus informed, darted off on his errand.

"Now, Joe," said the lady, "come with me."

They started, the lad slinking along beside his stately companion, while Margaret walked thoughtfully one or two steps in advance. The crowd of boys stared, giggled, whooped, followed, and at last one voice cried out, —

"He, he! Joe's got a gal!"

"Why don't you give her your arm, Joe?" shouted another.

Theodora's blood was on fire, but she never turned her head. They were not many rods from her home. Did those few feet of roadway divide civilization from barbarism? Was it God's fault, or was it partly hers, that men and manners changed thus, as one went "down street" from her dwelling?

"Keep close to me, Joe," she said, but her voice shook with indignant shame. Margaret waited for them to come up with her. The boys, still hooting and chuckling, gradually dispersed, and the trio went on unmolested.

The two women took Joe into the kitchen, and gave him supper. When Theodora examined her *protégé* in the light, her heart sank. He was about fourteen years old, slender and loosely made. His hands were long, dirty and repulsive. He had reddish, watery eyes and a small, pinched nose. His mouth hung open, and showed traces of tobacco juice about it. The whole face was pale, unhealthy, and idiotic.

"He looks like a parasite on humanity," whispered Theodora to Margaret; "the creature of a horrible, mocking chance."

"God knows why he lives," said Margaret, simply.

Theodora answered, smiling, "Evidently, science has n't spoiled your religion yet."

In process of time Joe's brother-in-law, An-

drew Moore, arrived, and was ushered into the dining-room, where the ladies proceeded to cross-examine him. He was a good-looking young fellow about twenty-five years old. He admitted at once that he had set the lad adrift.

"I was in hopes, ma'am," said he, "as he would get took up, an' sent to the Reform School. I've got the whole family on my hands, — the old man 'n' the old woman, an' the little uns. My woman hain't worked much since her baby was born, though the baby's three or four months old. We are considerable in debt. Joe's just the ruin of his fam'ly. They can't stay nowhere on account of this boy. They git turned out of every place they go to. You know rich folks, when they has some one as ain't quite right, can hire somebody to keep 'em out of mischief; but it comes hard on poor folks, as can't spare neither time nor money to take care of 'em."

"But don't you think it was cruel to turn him out, when he had nowhere to go?" asked Theodora, a little astounded by the young man's cool way of looking at the matter.

"Well, you see, miss, it was a question between turnin' him out or the rest of 'em. I can't feed 'em all, even with old Huckleberry's help. He'll drink most all he earns, any way; an' Annie's that sickly she ought not to work

at all. Then Joe's dangerous when he's mad. He threwed a stone as big as my two fists right through the kitchen winder, an' then I told him to clear out. It might ha' killed the baby, let alone my havin' to pay for the winder."

"He says you beat him," said Theodora.

"Well, I've tried to lick the badness out of him," frankly admitted the young man. "You can, out of some boys, you know."

Finally young Moore was induced to promise to take Joe in for a few days, till Miss Justice could make some other provision for the unfortunate lad. As Moore went out of the door, Joe's mother appeared. She had been at a neighbor's, and had only just received Miss Justice's message. She seemed to be a decent woman, of English origin, though she said she was born and had lived in Canada and the States all her life. Her first husband, the father of Andrew's wife, was an Englishman; Joe and her three younger boys were the children of her second marriage with a French Canadian. No, her husband did n't work much, and he did drink; but he was always good-natured, and she had n't no fault to find with him. Joe was the trial of her life. If he had work, he would n't stick to it. He bothered the neighbors, and the family were forced to move from one place to another continually. They had moved four

times in a little over two years. They were at "Slade's," the first of the winter, and had been pretty comfortable there, though it was a hard life for her, making the little they could earn feed them all. She could n't ever so much as think of getting clothes from their wages. The three younger children did not go to school, because they had no shoes; and it was surprising to see how much they ate, for all they stayed in the house so much, — butter especially. Nights she had plenty to do, getting breakfast ready and drying her husband's and Joe's shoes for the next morning. There was so much snow that winter, it kept their shoes wet nearly all the time. She had to wash and dry their clothes in the night, too. And Joe was such a torment, and he acted bad about his work; and so they packed up, and she come down here; and then his father come too, and left the boy there, hoping he would get "took up" and put somewhere. She should n't like to complain of him herself, but if he had got into some trouble and been put into the Reform School, may be it would n't have been so bad for him. She had n't done nothing but cry the last three days; but she could n't blame Andrew for not wanting him round, after he throwed that stone in the window which came so near hitting the baby.

Margaret and Theodora scarcely knew

whether to blame or sympathize, and both suspected that her husband's drinking had more to do with the family destitution than the wife would admit. They dismissed her with some presents of food, and let her take Joe with her, poor Joe, who stumbled a little going out into the darkness.

Theodora came back from the door with a puzzled look.

"Joe is the problem," she said. "His family can't solve it. Can I?"

"You can try," said Margaret. "Dear, ought you not to know these people, and seek to be their friend?"

Theodora threw out her arms with a mournful gesture.

"A friend," she said, — "that is what *they* need; but for *me*! Was I made for Joe?"

Margaret's pulses beat in sympathy with this rebellious outcry of a disappointed heart, but her soul saw farther than did Theodora's dimmed eyes, and she answered, —

"Not more than Joe was made for you. You need some one to work for. It may be God made him to keep you from aimless idleness."

II.

Andrew Moore walked away from Miss Justice's in a bad humor. It was the first time he had ever been in a grand house, the first time he had ever sat in a handsomely appointed room and talked with an elegant woman. Theodora's calmness irritated him. He resented her superiority. She would have looked very lovely to an eye educated to appreciate the beautiful head covered with light brown hair, the delicate features, the supple motions and the waving lines of her figure; but this young fellow perceived none of these perfections. He only felt that she belonged to another world from his, and was angry because he seemed to himself to be in some indefinite way an inferior in her presence. He was vexed because she had constrained him, and made him promise to take Joe back.

"I dare say," he muttered, "that girl thinks she can boss everybody in this village if she's a mind to."

Then he thought of the little weak-minded woman who waited for him, with her sickly child, in his squalid home, and grew angrier still, and, calling his sins and follies "his luck," he cursed the evil fortune that had joined him to this ill-starred family.

"I've more 'n half a mind to cut the whole

concern," he muttered. "I meant fair enough, as fair as I could, when I married her, but I did n't quite count in Joe! She would n't do nothin' if I left her. They 're too poor to go to law. I don't care a dime for her, — and yet I 'd kinder hate to leave her. She 's *such* a little fool."

Andrew Moore was a native American citizen, having been born two weeks after his father and mother landed in this country. They were Irish Protestants of a low class. Andrew grew up in a manufacturing town, and graduated early from school into the mill. In due time he became a mule-spinner. There were absolutely no refining influences brought to bear upon his young life. American republicanism has relieved the child of foreign parentage from the somewhat despotic discipline of the Old World, but it has not always, even in New England, provided much to take its place.

It is a notorious fact that the children of Irish parents are a turbulent, disturbing growth in that social condition which we in besotted contentment persist in naming our civilization, notwithstanding the fact that it is very inadequate to produce the best results in all its component parts. In manufacturing towns, employers might do much to elevate their work-people, if they would acknowledge that a moral tie

exists between the classes bound by the business relation. Manufacturers, also, would do wisely to remember that semi-barbarism is very dangerous when dowered with the power and freedom of democracy. If the sense of duty is not strong enough to induce the providing of time and means for more education of our ignorant people, it may be well that danger stands ready to be the safeguard of the republic it seems to threaten. Fear may supplement the tardy conscience of the rich and rouse them to the necessary action to secure the enlightenment of the poor.

Andrew spent the days of his youth in the mill, his evenings in the street and in saloons, his nights in the filthy air of crowded tenements, while the Sundays were passed in playing games of base-ball, or attending cock-fights. The Protestant churches where he lived did not greatly concern themselves about the young Irishman's spiritual welfare. He would have stood more chance of receiving some religious training had he been a Catholic, under the un-sleeping watch of Rome.

Andrew had come to Newbridge a little more than a year before this February evening. Joe's family were then living there. Joe's half-sister, poor little Annie, toiling day after day, with scarcely a single girlish hope or pleasure, had

almost immediately fallen in love with Andrew. It was a genuine love, though probably a feeble one, as the pitiful creature had hardly vitality enough for a strong emotion. He had been amused with the tribute of silly affection laid at his feet, and, although the girl was neither pretty nor winning, he had been moved, occasionally, when passing her in the mill entries, to give her a rude kiss, or a jocular clutch of the arm. Joe noted these evidences of intimacy, and told of them as a joke. Andrew, hearing of this tale-bearing, fell upon Joe in the street, and beat him violently. The matter came at last to the ears of the French step-father, who was honestly fond of Annie, and who swore he would have no "fooling" round the girl. "S'e be silly," he said, "but s'e no be bad. He s'all marry or he s'all quit."

There was a dance in one of the tenements the night after old Huckleberry made this declaration. Dances in the houses were forbidden, but the "Company's" rule was often evaded. The festivity began at ten, and lasted till dawn. It was a rough bacchanalian affair, and before morning Annie's step-father extorted from Andrew, who was then half drunk, a promise that he would marry Annie the next day. The promise was fulfilled, though the bridegroom was perfectly sober when the cere-

mony took place. A little genuine pity for Annie urged Andrew to this step, but the act also pleased him because he felt that he thus defied, and asserted his complete independence of his past life. The wedding was celebrated according to Catholic rites. Soon afterwards the Huckleberrys moved away from the village.

Andrew, after his marriage, went to work in a neighboring town. Annie stayed at her place in Mr. Justice's mill. Soon came a strike in the factory where Andrew was employed. He joined in it, and for some months Annie supported them both. Fortunately the strike concluded, and Andrew began to work in time to allow Annie to leave the mill a few weeks before her baby was born. Then they set up housekeeping, and Andrew changed work again and went into Mr. Justice's mill. They sent for Annie's mother to come and keep house and care for the baby, when Annie returned to the factory. The French father was expected to support his own children, and they hoped to get rid of Joe; but Huckleberry had thus far done very little towards maintaining his part of the family, Joe had come back, Annie had been unable to work much, and Andrew, owing to her illness and his own long idleness during the strike, was heavily in debt.

On all these things the young man moodily

pondered, as he walked slowly down the street, after his interview with Miss Justice. He thought also of something else, — something which seemed to rise like a real substance before his eyes, till, as he came into the light of a lamp-post that guarded the bridge over the river, he scarcely started as he saw his thought embodied before him. He stopped, staring at a woman, who stared boldly back as soon as she saw him. She was young and handsome, with curly reddish-brown hair, gray eyes, and rosy gleams in her transparent skin. She held in her hands a milliner's box. Her dress was decent, though a little tawdry. Andrew grew white as he looked at her.

"How come you here, Nell?"

"How come you here, I say," retorted she.

"Well, I was n't lookin' for you," said the man.

"Nor I for you," answered the woman. "I was n't pining for a sight of you, I can tell you that, when I come to Newbridge."

"It was just a happen, then?" asked he, a little uneasily.

"Just a happen," said she. "An' now, look here! you just let me alone, an' I'll let you alone. I'm not proud enough of you to want folks to know you're my husband."

Andrew started, and looked into the dark-

ness surrounding the lighted spot where they stood, as though he would search out some possible listener. "No, for God's sake, Nell, don't tell!" he cried, in a low tone.

"Eh?" said she. "Why not? It's no such uncommon thing for a drunken brute to beat his wife as I need be ashamed to tell of it. The only uncommon thing in our doin's, as near as I can make out, was that I would n't stand it, as most Irishwomen do. I was reared too much like a Yankee, I guess."

As she spoke, her face and figure were defined in strong light and shade, with the dark river as a background. Andrew, who had never loved that pale-faced Annie, who waited for him with her child a few rods away, felt this woman's beauty pierce his heart like a knife.

"You know, Nell," he said, "I did n't mean no harm. You should n't mind what a man does when he's drunk, an' don't know what he's doin'."

"Drunk or sober," said Nell, "it hurts when a man beats you. It hurts deeper than the skin, too."

"You struck back," said Andrew, "or I would n't have hit so hard. It madded me."

"It madded *me*!" said she savagely. "An' just you remember till you die, Andrew Moore, that I've struck you in the face. Now le' me go."

He caught her arm. "Where be you a-goin', Nell, at this time o' night?"

She laughed at his suspicion. "You fool," she said, "I'm goin' up to Miss Justice's, to take a bonnet to one of her girls."

"I don't believe you. It's too late."

"No, it ain't," she said, snappishly. "She only ordered it this evenin', 'cause she's goin' early to-morrow mornin' to Blackstone, to see her mother, who's sick."

"Did you ever see Miss Justice?"

"No; what of her?"

"Nothing; only I hate her. Where do you live?" he added, after a minute.

"Oh, don't you wish you knew?"

"Well, I'll tell you where you work," said he. "You're the new girl in Mis' Carey's shop."

"Who told you there was a new girl there?"

Andrew made no answer, for it was Annie who had told him. Nell waited a little while, and looked at him keenly.

"Who told you? Some girl, likely. Well, take care what you do."

"Take care yourself," he said, angrily. "If you don't behave yourself, I will take your wages."

This frightened Nell, as she thought she had

heard that a husband could possess himself of his wife's earnings ; but Andrew knew, even while he spoke, that his threat was made in aimless rage, since he had far more to fear than she if he announced himself as her husband. Each faced the other with distrust, and then Nell said defiantly, —

“ I dare you to lay a finger on my money, and don't you never speak to me again, night nor day. I've had enough of you.”

She started up the road along the river bank. Andrew watched her, and a low groan escaped his lips as she vanished in the shadows of the pines that overhung the stream. He said aloud to himself, —

“ I ain't a Catholic ; I don't believe in them popish ceremonies.” He paused, and then added, “ But, good God, how shall I make sure she don't hear about Annie ? ”

He went home at length. The family lived in a basement tenement ; that is, the house was built on a slope, and the rooms they occupied were level with the ground in front, but in the back came up against the bank. The Huckleberry family had also an attic where Joe slept. Andrew and Annie had a small room to the right of the kitchen. Huckleberry and his wife had one at the left, and beds were made up at night upon the kitchen floor for the

He ate the cakes that Annie's tired hands had made for him, and watched the girl furtively as she took up the baby and fed it from a bottle. He was thinking, "How shall I keep Nell from hearing about her?"

Theodora, ignorant of the new factor which Nell's appearance had brought into what she termed the "Joe problem," spent the next day looking for a place suitable for the boy. She told her father about the people, and he commented a little sadly, —

"It is a fact, my dear, that among factory operatives families seldom attain to assured comfort, unless they are exceptionally fortunate in matters which they cannot themselves control, such as birth, death, and health, or unless they are so exceptionally gifted with prudence and virtue that they have a genius for poverty. The ordinary mill-hand who marries another ordinary mill-hand, who has numerous children, with frequent doctor's bills to pay, — excuse me, Margaret! — and who often loses work from one cause or another, struggles against odds which are beyond the powers of common men and women to overcome. This family is probably made of miserable stuff morally, but one such member as that boy would prove in most operative families the decisive ounce to turn the scale of fortune against them."

"Then we get more than our share, and they get less than theirs, out of the mill," said Theodora warmly.

"It would seem so," said her father; "but it is all according to the laws of trade."

"Oh," cried she, "if eternal justice is anywhere, it must be everywhere! I do not know," she continued, "that one has the right to use against a poor man the full brute power of wealth any more than he has to use against a weak man the full brute force of physical strength."

"Nor," said Margaret, "do I believe it a wise policy."

"I agree with you in my heart," replied Mr. Justice; "yet look at history. Everywhere the weak man goes to the wall. Everywhere the strong man steps forward, with his foot upon his feeble brother's corpse. The great races flourish and civilization grows — or *seems*, at least, to grow — because through unnumbered throes of agony, silent, helpless, unutterably pathetic, the weak races fall, and dying where they fall, their blood enriches the soil from which our glories spring."

"No, no!" cried Theodora, like one in pain; "it cannot be that it is better for the world that men should be cruel and selfish than it would be for them to be kind and helpful."

"But think," responded her father; "there seems to be no other way for nations to advance."

"Where is God, then?" asked his daughter.

"Perhaps," Margaret's quiet voice suggested, "it is evolution; and I am not sure but it will prove as easy to find God in evolution as in Calvinism."

"Our nation," said Mr. Justice, "is built on the Indian's grave; and yet, so far as we can judge, we are a people, notwithstanding all our crimes, better worth having in the world than the Indian, if only one of the two races can survive."

"Yes," said Margaret; "but we should have been still better worth having in the world if we had been noble enough to live with the Indian, and civilize instead of butchering him."

"I think we are the savages," sighed Theodora.

"Then," replied her father, "if savages must fight, I don't know that it impugns God's moral intention that he allows the nobler people to conquer; since, after a time, ashamed of its own barbarity, the victorious race may so far civilize itself that it can evolve the virtue of consideration for the weak, too fine a flower of civilization to be its first blossom."

"In other words," added Margaret, "of the

two barbarians, the white and the red, victory is granted to the white, because, in spite of his crimes, he is likely to learn to care for the Indian sooner than the Indian, if victorious, would learn to care for him."

"But the factory," urged Theodora. "We must not comfortably forget our own sins, while discussing the nation's."

"It is much the same thing," said Mr. Justice.

"All moral questions are own cousins," observed Margaret.

"There may be better systems than ours," continued Mr. Justice; "but no manufacturer yet dares use other methods. We are afraid to risk the terrible strain of commercial crises with a new policy. And we are ambitious; the greed of success has seized our souls. It is not merely wealth that we want; we desire to be greatly successful in the pursuit we have chosen. That passion is the moral bane of the business man."

Margaret spoke slowly: "Drink causes most of the pauperism of the operatives."

"Yes," assented Mr. Justice frankly; "but it is their poverty that makes them drink."

This was a new idea to Theodora, and, pondering on it, she said no more. She wondered also at her father. Had he been thinking all

his life of these problems which now vexed her young mind for the first time? The truth was that Mr. Justice had a sensitive rather than a strong moral nature. He lacked the believing heart necessary to combat evil persistently. He saw objections to any proposed social remedy as plainly as he perceived arguments in favor thereof. Perhaps his mind had not the finer quality which could compare accurately, and see which side of a question was the more deserving, when both sides merited great consideration. Pained and disheartened by the misery he encountered in the world, and not sure of any cure, he had sought to save himself from suffering by avoiding direct contact with the troubles of the poor. He prosecuted his business, and endeavored to convince himself that, as he could not relieve his operatives from all privation, he was not responsible for any of their misfortunes. He sought to escape self-condemnation by reflecting that it would not be well for any people to be wholly relieved from misfortune, or from the direful consequences of their own errors. He did not allow himself sufficiently to consider the difference between a course of action tending to reduce a class to dependency, and one which should stimulate self-help, while giving encouragement, assistance, and while removing unnecessary burdens. Mr. Justice's ideals were

high, but they mocked his indolence and selfish ambition from afar. He had not even tried to reach up to them, but through all the years, undesired convictions settled in his heart and weighed heavily there.

All night after meeting Nell, and all the next morning at his work, Andrew Moore was haunted by the memory of a fair, scornful face, and by the fear of punishment for his crime. He realized that the lightest allusion to him in Nell's presence might lead to the mention of his marriage to Annie, and at that thought he trembled. At noon he took his way toward Mrs. Carey's shop, and by watching and following, ascertained that Nell's walk to her boarding-place led her through the woods. He scrambled through the underbrush, and intercepted her. She greeted him rather rudely as he approached. He talked with her a few minutes, and became convinced that thus far she had told no one of their relation, and had heard nothing of Annie. This comforted him for the moment, but when he returned to the mill, that afternoon, his terror came back. He felt that he must decide to do something at once. That evening he met Nell again.

"I've told you over 'n' over," she said, "that I did n't want to have nothin' to do with you."

"But I can't let you alone," said Andrew; "and I won't, neither."

She looked at him curiously. "I declare," said she, "I believe you are soft on me still. Thank you, but I have n't no inclination that way."

She went by him, upon this, holding her graceful head very erect. She felt pleased and proud. She had had admiration from many men, but to have her own husband violently in love with her was an experience so unlike what seemed to befall most women that it elated her greatly, and dimmed the memory of the drunken rage in which he had beaten her, two years before.

That evening, Annie sat patiently beside the kitchen fire, rocking her baby in her lap.

"I wonder why Andrew don't come home," said Mrs. Huckleberry.

Joe spoke up, with his mouth full of baked potato:—

"The last I seen of him, he was up in the woods, gabbin' with that new gal that works in Mis' Carey's."

Annie said not a word, and when Andrew finally came she only followed his motions with disquieted eyes. She never once thought of asking him anything about the girl.

The next forenoon, Andrew went boldly to

Mrs. Carey's store. The mistress came forward to meet him. Nell sat in the rear of the room, herself half hidden by a curtain, but she saw him very plainly. All night his desire to see her face again had been greater even than his fear of the law which he had broken. Her image had come between him and Annie when he had tried to look at the mother of his child. Joe had refused to go up to his attic to sleep, and then had had a fit in the kitchen, waking everybody at midnight. The baby had cried, and Annie had toiled over it for hours. Andrew had helped her a little, but most of the time he had lain still, watching her, listening to the screams of the child, to Joe's hideous noises, to the chatter and cries of the other children, — thinking all the time of Nell. He pitied Annie still, but he had begun to pity himself more; and he had also begun to remind what he called his conscience, that it was his duty, at whatever cost to this slim girl, to return to his first marriage vows.

As Andrew talked with Mrs. Carey, Nell said to herself, "That is my husband, and there he stands like any stranger!"

In a moment Mrs. Carey called out, "Nell, bring me a chair!"

"There 's one there," said Nell, in a reluctant voice.

"It's rickety," answered the shop-woman. "I don't dare trust my weight to it, and I want to reach the upper shelf. Come yourself."

Nell came out from behind the dark curtain that shut off the back part of the shop. She stood still, waiting for her mistress to pass out from behind the counter. A light from above struck her auburn hair, and turned some floating curly rings to gold. When the older woman had hustled by her, Nell came slowly down the store, looking at the dark, passionate man before her as if the space where he stood were empty. She sprang on the tottering chair, reached up lightly, and took from the shelf a box. Andrew's senses were smitten with pain as he marked her strong, graceful motions. She stepped down, put the box on the counter, opened it, and carelessly displayed its contents. He dared not meet her eyes, and bent his face downward. His head was handsome, and Nell suddenly noticed that his shoulders were shapely. Accidentally, his hand touched hers. He started violently. She looked at him with cool surprise, and their eyes met in one long gaze. Then he turned his glance away again. Instantly, Nell's mood changed. The unconscious loyalty of her nature asserted itself. She felt the bond so hard to break, though it is not always made of love or even of passion, which

holds a woman to a man whose wife she has once been. Her lips began to tremble.

"He might say one kind word," she thought.

After a moment, as he did not speak, she turned to fly from him. He reached across the counter and held her. She besought him with her eyes.

"Let me go," she breathed.

"No. My God," he cried, in a low voice, "I love you, Nell, better 'n my life! Meet me to-night at five at the station, 'n' we 'll go back to Fall River together, 'n' not tell nobody here, but we 'll begin again, all new, there. Bring what money you have. Don't be afraid to trust me. I 'll be your best friend. We won't tell nobody here, because it would just make talk, if folk knew we 'd been married all this time. Will you come? Nell, you *must* come."

"I 'll — see," said Nell slowly, and Andrew detected a yielding tone in her voice.

"Well, don't say nothin,'" he answered; "only come, for the love of old times, an' better times than you ever knew."

Here Mrs. Carey reappeared, and Andrew hurried out of the store. His head was dizzy, and he stumbled over Joe, who was sitting on the steps. Moore gave the boy a savage kick, and Joe raised his bleared eyes, and angrily watched his brother-in-law walk away.

"I 'll fix him," muttered the lad.

Nell, meanwhile, stood alone in the shop, for Mrs. Carey had followed Andrew out. The girl felt very uncertain what to do. She had never loved Andrew very much, even when first married to him, but now her heart yearned towards him somewhat. Stronger still was the impulse of loyalty. Her nature was more true than she wanted it to be. She had wayward, rebellious desires, and tried to follow them, but she could not long disregard any obligation. She did not understand the turmoil in her mind. She only knew that Andrew, as his steps died away in the distance, seemed drawing her after him.

Joe pushed open the door, and shambled in. He stopped before Nell, and stared coarsely at her.

"Well," she cried at last, "would you know me again in a crowd?"

"Who be you?" said Joe.

"Who be I? Who be *you*?"

"I'm Joe," said he. "I'm Annie's brother, 'n' you'd better look out wot you do, or I'll have you took up. I'd like to git him took up," he added, with a chuckle.

"Who's Annie?" asked Nell.

Joe grinned sarcastically. "As ef you did n't know!" he said disdainfully.

"Well, I don't know, an' I don't care, neither," said she, turning from him.

But Joe followed her. "Don't you know?" he asked earnestly.

"No, I don't."

He studied her face. "Mebbe," he said at last, "he's playin' a game on you! I seen him an' you gabbin' together lots o' times. Mebbe he is! Will you help me pay him up?"

"Tell me what you mean," resumed Nell, in a steady voice. "Who is Annie?"

"She's my sister," said the boy slowly. "She's his wife."

"Whose wife?"

"His'n, — Andrew Moore's."

"You lie!"

"No, I don't," said Joe; but as he spoke he backed towards the door.

"Stop!" cried she. "Before God, I did n't know nothin' of this." Her breast heaved, and the words came hard from her lips. "Tell me, where does this Annie live?"

But Joe was frightened out of his plan of making her his accomplice in some scheme of vengeance upon Andrew, and he answered promptly, "I shan't tell ye."

"Oh, I won't hurt her. I'll — be a friend to her. Has she been married long?"

"None o' yer business."

"Oh, yes, it is," panted Nell. "Do tell me. Andrew Moore has played me a worse trick as ever he played her."

She entreated, she stormed, but Joe fled before her passion, and told her no more. Left alone, she steadied her head with her hands, and sat down on the floor. This, then, was the reason for Andrew's urgent desire to keep their former relations private. "He has a wife here," she said to herself, "an' he wants to clear out with me, 'n' not let her know. Then," she added slowly, "he likes me best!"

III.

Annie came home from her work early that noon. She was ill, and told her mother that she had fainted in the mill. She sat down, looking very white, and took up her baby.

"I seen Andrew into Mis' Carey's, talkin' with that gal ag'in, this mornin'," said Joe, leering up at her from his seat on the floor. "Ef I was big enough, I'd lick him, — pay him for some o' the lickin's he's gin me. She said she did n't know nothin' about his havin' a wife here. Took on like blazes about it."

The mother plied Joe with angry questions, but the boy rose and slouched out without farther speech. Annie simply said, after a long

pause, "I guess Miss Justice ain't goin' to do nothin' about takin' Joe away, after all."

In a few minutes Andrew came in. As he entered the kitchen, Annie's pale face shone like a white gleam in the dark, dingy room, and his heart contracted with pain and something like tenderness. He sat down by the table, and thought how unlucky it was that he was so "soft-hearted." He could not look forward to possessing Nell without seeing the shadow of Annie's suffering fall across his joy.

Mrs. Huckleberry set out Andrew's dinner sullenly, and he ate it silently. After a few minutes, Annie came and waited on him. Once, as she passed him, she laid her fingers very lightly on his shoulder. He bent his head low over his plate.

"Set down," said the mother gruffly. "You 're not fit to be waitin' on him. Sick yersel'."

Andrew looked up as Annie staggered with a kettle in her hands which she had lifted from the stove. He sprang forward, caught her in his arms, carried her into their room, and laid her on the bed. He leaned over her, and there were tears in his eyes. She raised her hand feebly to touch him. He turned away. "Don't go back to work again to-day," he said, and went out of the house, meaning never to enter it again. He groaned aloud as he closed the

door. Just then he saw into his own heart, and knew how cruel and selfish it was. But in a few minutes he lifted his head, squared his shoulders, and tried to smile, saying to himself, —

“Now, there’s lots of fellers would n’t think nothin’ of leavin’ a girl like that. I ain’t half so bad as them. An’ if Nell ’n’ me get on pretty well, I guess I can send Annie some money before long, an’ may be I can come an’ see her once in a while.”

That afternoon Annie sat alone in the kitchen, with the baby on her lap. Her mother had gone to do a neighbor’s washing. The girl felt very ill, and her heart was even heavier than usual. She sang softly to the baby, and the song sounded like a long, low moan. She heard steps on the frozen ground outside, and looked up to see a face at the window. It vanished, and an instant later the door opened; a woman came in with a firm step, and walked across the room to Annie..

The girl recognized her with a sinking heart; it was she whom Joe had seen with Andrew. Silently the two looked at each other. A faint angry color rose in Annie’s cheek, but Nell’s face did not change, till she glanced down at the baby, when her eyes grew dark with a meaning Annie could never have fathomed.

"That is my husband's child," Nell thought, "and it is not mine." Aloud, she said, "That is *your* baby?"

"Yes," said Annie; still Nell stood and looked at it. "What do you want?" faltered the mother, finally.

Nell started, as from a dream, and then laughed slightly, but unquietly. "I wanted to see it and you," she said. "Don't you never worry for fear o' my doin' you any harm. I never knew Andrew was married — to you, till that boy — Huckleberry Joe, they call him — told me so to-day. You see, I used to know Andrew, years ago, when we was young — an' I — was silly. That's all. But I thought may be folks might be tellin' you stories as would trouble you. Don't listen to nothin' of the sort. I'm goin' away to-night. If Andrew ever treats you bad, you send for me. Mis' Carey 'll know where I am. She's my cousin. Good-by." Annie, bewildered, stared at her visitor. Nell paused, and then said, "When I'm clean gone, Andrew will never think o' me again. I know him. So that 'll be all right. I'd like to take the baby a minute."

She stooped, lifted the child in strong, tender arms, carried it to the window, gazed wistfully at its tiny face, touched her lips lightly to the puny cheek, then brought it back to the young

mother, smiled a rare, sweet smile, and passed out into the frosty air.

"Oh," moaned Annie, "how pretty she is!"

IV.

Andrew Moore left the station, where he had waited in vain for Nell, and took the path through the woods to Mrs. Carey's house. The sun was sinking in the west, and showed like a red fire behind the pines. As he turned a curve in the path, he saw a woman walking in the rich light, a little distance before him. He ran till he reached her.

"Why did n't you come?" he cried.

"I had other business. I went to see your other wife."

"Oh!" he groaned.

Nell faced him defiantly. "Yes," she said. "An' I told her as you an' I was old acquaintances, an' nothin' more; an' now I tell you that I 'm goin' away from here, — but not with you. So my advice to you is to make it up with Annie, and be good to her."

"Annie is no wife of mine," he said doggedly, "and you are. If you were a decent woman, you 'd go with me."

Nell's eyes blazed. "Jest stop that," she said, in a trembling voice. "I won't be in-

sulted. I married you fair an' square ; so did *she*. What you've done has set *me* free, but has bound you to her. I'll get a bill, an' you can marry her over again, if you've got scruples about the first time."

The man begged and entreated. He threw himself upon the ground at her feet. He wound his arms about her knees and pulled her down towards him.

"I could n't!" she cried, struggling. Then she looked into his upturned face. "Since I saw that girl's baby," she said, "I could n't like you if I tried ; and I would n't live with you if I did like you."

His eyes fell, his head drooped, but still he clung to her, and as she tried to escape she dragged him along the frosty ground, while the red sun sank out of sight between the forest stems, and a darkness fell upon the two. He lifted up his face once more to hers, but her heart only grew still and cold at the sight. Afterward, after many days, alone in her chamber, she often cried and shuddered, and her heart ached, remembering that dark, desperate face, with the unearthly glow upon it from the wintry twilight heaven above.

"It's hell," he cried, "you're leavin' me to! Don't you see what that family is? They'll keep me poor an' wretched all my life. It's

hell with them. It's hell without you. And I love you, Nell, — oh, my God, how I love you!"

"Make heaven out of your hell," she said. "I must."

He could not comprehend her, but his arms fell to the ground. He no longer dared touch her. She stood free, but now that she was free she felt unable to leave him thus.

"Why did you marry her?" she asked as he crouched at her feet.

For a moment there was no answer; then he said, "I was mad with you, an'" — he hesitated again — "when old Huckleberry teased me to marry her I pitied her. I was soft-hearted. I could n't leave a girl, like other fellers do. It was all her fault."

"Now," said Nell, "you've said the meanest thing a man can say, an' what a man always does say when he's ruined a girl. Just you mind: if you treat her badly, I'll have you arrested for bigamy."

Her indignation restored her strength, and she left him, not once looking back to see him, lying there on the earth.

Annie's husband went back to her that evening, but he found no peace for his alarmed soul. He reflected that he was entirely in Nell's power, and that at any moment, should

she be seized with revengeful impulse, she could cause his arrest. He knew that she had left the village on the evening of that fateful day, but he knew not whither she had gone. Sometimes he thought he would seek her out, and try once more to win her; but he was afraid to face again those wrathful, accusing eyes. His present life grew more irksome to him. He ceased to feel any tenderness for Annie, and the child irritated him. His conscience was drowned in a flood of fear and self-pity. After a day or two of this sort of torment, he made up his mind to leave the place, and "tramp" his way to some distant part of the country, out of the reach of Nell's possible vengeance. So there came a night when Annie waited in vain for the father of her child. The next forenoon the neighbors told the young mother that during the evening while she had been watching for him, he was seen to leave the village by the train.

That afternoon, Theodora Justice stood at the door of the basement where Joe's family lived. She had found a farmer who, for a consideration, which in her new-born zeal she intended secretly to furnish, had promised to take Joe and try to teach him farm work.

Miss Justice looked at the row of dark, damp tenements, and her gray eyes grew thoughtful.

She entered the dingy, ill-odorous kitchen, and her heart felt heavy. The women within were slightly clad. Her own garments were warm and rich. Was she clothed from the rents paid for these wretched rooms?

She told her errand, and received in return an account of all the occurrences of the past few days.

"Annie won't believe," said the mother, "that that girl has gone off with Andrew, but I know she has."

"Had you had trouble with your husband before?" asked Miss Justice.

"No, miss, we never had no trouble."

"He was a good husband, then?"

The mother made answer, "Oh, he wan't none of the best, nor none of the worst."

Miss Justice could not understand why these women showed so little emotion as they talked of these things. Their voices were simply dreary and hopeless, though Annie's eyes were red from weeping.

"I'll have to do something with my baby," said the deserted girl. "I can't take care of it, an' work in the mill; an' if I could put it somewheres, mother could go out washin' a good deal."

"If Joe goes," said the elder woman, "we could get on pretty well, if it wan't for the baby."

"But how can you bear to send your baby away?" cried Theodora.

"Well," said Annie, "it would be hard, for I think it is getting real cunning. If I'd known how things was to be, I'd ha' tried to send it off when it was first born. Then I should n't ha' cared."

She bent over the child a little wistfully. When she raised her eyes, she met Theodora's puzzled, compassionate glance. So these two gazed at each other, — both women, both creatures who had suffered, both daughters of the factory; but how differently had the factory dealt with them!

Theodora put out her hand, and lightly touched Annie's shoulder. "My poor child," she said, "stay at home for a few days and rest, and take care of the baby, and we will see what can be done for you."

"I *have* to stay at home," answered Annie, simply. "I'm so sick, I can't work now, but I'll be better in a day or two."

"Indeed," said the mother, "Annie ain't fit to work. She's been to the mill many a mornin' when she was too sick to hold up her head; but poor folks can't stop to mind such things."

"What is the matter?" asked Theodora.

"I have a pain in my side," said Annie.
"It's standin' so much does it."

"Do you stand all the time you work?"

"Yes."

"Have you no time to sit?"

"Not much; an' we hain't no chairs, an' the overseer won't let us sit on the floor."

"You could sit down, now and then, if you had chairs?"

"Yes. There used to be chairs, but they is all broke."

Theodora drew a deep breath. She was sure that it was only through negligence that new chairs had not been provided, but this certainty, while it held the factory managers partially excused, did not quite soothe an aching feeling in her heart, since this young mother, whose rest was broken all night, must suffer all day from such oversight.

"Well," thought the lady, "I don't know but it is worth while to live just to remedy such neglect."

She left the girl sorrowfully, and went straight to Mrs. Carey, to learn what she could about Andrew and Nell. Mrs. Carey, although her cousin, had known nothing about Nell till she came to the village, a few weeks previously. She did not then even know that the girl had been married, and nothing had roused her sus-

picion, since Nell's maiden name had also been Moore. After her final interview with Andrew the young wife had confided her story to Mrs. Carey, and charged her to watch what happened to Annie, but on no account to reveal to any one the fact of her own marriage. Consequently, when Miss Justice questioned the milliner, all she received in reply was Mrs. Carey's assertion that Nell was not with Andrew, and that she did not know where he was. Theodora was not wholly inclined to believe her statements, especially as the woman refused to tell where Nell had gone. Such clumsy manoeuvres and palpable mysteries would probably soon have resulted of themselves in a complete enlightenment of the whole affair, had not a higher power taken the matter into its own hands, and arranged all things according to some deeper sense of fitness.

That very evening Margaret came to Miss Justice. "I have been," she said, "to see Annie Moore. She is very ill, and needs a competent nurse."

"Hire one, and I will pay her," said Theodora, — who had no notion of showing herself unready to meet any claim of simple charity, however bewildered and halting she might be in regard to the various social theories which were dimly revealing themselves to her mind.

Indeed it was a relief to learn of such a clear and evident duty which she might perform.

"What is the matter?" asked Mr. Justice, looking up from the Tribune.

Margaret briefly stated the case. "In her exhausted condition," said she, "it is a serious matter. She has worked when she should have been in bed. I doubt if she lives through the night."

Theodora drew a long sobbing breath. Mr. Justice ordered out the coachman, sent for medicines, nurse, everything that could be needed, and himself walked with Margaret and Theodora down to the house where the sick girl lived. He paused at the door, while the women went in.

"These tenements are abominable," he thought. "It's a dozen years since I have been in this part of the village and seen them. Theodora shall have her way, and shut them up."

In a moment his daughter came out to him. She put her hands on his shoulders, and looked in his handsome eyes, so like her own.

"Father," said she, "I shall stay here to-night."

"Very well," he answered, kissing her.

Theodora was useful that night, for the nurse for whom they sent could not come, and she, under Margaret's directions, with the mother's

assistance, took charge of Annie. Mr. Justice returned at midnight, to see if he could be of any service. His servants came and went all night on errands. Margaret had another patient in a critical condition, and was forced to be away part of the time, but no braver battle with death was fought that night over the couch of any lady in the land than the struggle to save this poor Annie, who had been so little heeded till she lay dying.

It was a strange scene, that dimly lighted, squalid room, with the white face upon the pillow, and the pale, lovely lady sitting by the bed. Old Huckleberry roamed restlessly in and out, and looked at his step-daughter's quiet face. The mother, when otherwise unoccupied, sat at the foot of the bed and tended Annie's baby. The small children were asleep on the kitchen floor, but Joe crouched in a corner of Annie's room, and watched his sister with a look of only half-human suffering in his eyes. Little as Annie had cared for him, she had always been gentle to him, and he felt something like affection and sorrow now, and was stupefied by a sensation of so high an order.

Although much of the time Annie required attention, there were long quiet intervals, when Theodora had nothing to do but think of these factory people, who seemed to have some claim

upon her, which hitherto she had not recognized. Her heart began to go out to them, just because many of them were sick and sorry, and needed her. She felt that it would not be hard to labor for them, because she would love them. Once, when Annie moaned, Theodora bent over her, with lips that trembled a little.

"Poor baby," murmured the dying girl.

"Don't be troubled," said Theodora. "I will see that it is well taken care of."

They waked Annie's little brothers, who came into the room, half asleep, and climbed on the bed to kiss their sister. They laid her baby's silent mouth to hers. Huckleberry wiped his eyes with the back of his hand, and went for the priest. The room was hushed. The mother knelt beside her daughter. A woman came from the upper part of the house, and, kneeling, with a candle in her hand, read prayers in a mumbling voice. Annie stirred uneasily, and asked, "Where's Joe?"

Theodora repeated the faint whisper aloud, and the boy started from a light slumber, and came to the bed.

"Good-by," said Annie. "You never meant no harm in anything, I know."

Joe slunk back, and sobbed in his corner on the floor. Annie never spoke again. Through it all she had not mentioned Andrew; but when

she lay dead in the morning light, her little face, scarce whiter than in life, was still sad.

Theodora took the baby home to keep until she could find a suitable person to care for it. It was a puny creature, and when Margaret came to see it she said it was so feeble, and had been so drugged by its ignorant grandmother, that she doubted whether it could live. Theodora remembered then that the old woman had taken the baby into her own room a little while before Annie died, because of its crying, and that after she brought it back it had slept constantly. Full of unnecessary remorse lest she, by her inattention, had been partly to blame, Miss Justice spent most of the day, after her night-watch, tending the child. The little life, however, flickered and went out, and late that afternoon the tiny body was laid beside the mother's. Living, she had not been a beautiful child, but in death she was lovely as a little angel carven in marble, — white, but blue-veined under the closed eyes. Theodora placed the fair head on Annie's arm, and as she looked at these two, lying peacefully together, her heart swelled within her, and she turned away quickly to hide her tears.

As she left the house, a woman stopped her.

"You're Miss Justice?" asked the stranger.

"Yes."

"Well," said the other, "I'm Nell Moore."

"Oh! Where is Andrew?"

"I dunno," said Nell.

"You don't?"

"No. Oh, you need n't think he went off with me. No, ma'am! I'm done with him. I married him fair enough."

"Married him!" cried Theodora.

"Yes," said Nell. "It can't do her no harm to tell now. I meant to see you an' tell you, when I heard to-day how kind you'd been to her, for I wanted to show you I was an honest woman, fit to take care of a child. So I brought my certificate," and Nell calmly produced the proof of her marriage, which Theodora scanned with astonished eyes. "We quarreled," went on Nell, "an' separated, an' he come here; an' he made believe marry that girl,—but she thought it was all right; an' I didn't know nothin' about her, an' when I found out it turned me against him more'n all he'd done to me; an' I pitied her, an' I could n't see as I could do anybody no good except by clearin' out, an' so I went. I've been stayin' to Bordentown, with Mis' Carey's sister; an' I heard he had left her, an' that she was dead, poor thing, an' so I come right over this afternoon, an' thought I'd speak to you about it."

"You and Andrew did not go away together!"

"Not much," said Nell frankly. "An' I'm goin' to get a bill from him. I won't be bothered with him no longer. What I wanted to see you about was — that baby. There's nobody wants it, I s'pose, an' I know Andrew well enough to know he won't 'worry himself about it. So if you can manage that I can have it, an' no fuss nor talk made, I'd take the best of care of it. I can earn enough to support it, an' I'd be much obliged to you."

Theodora stood amazed. "You would take that baby?" she said.

"Yes," said Nell. "I'm fond of children, an' I saw this one once, and took a fancy to it." She paused, grew red, and then added hurriedly, "It might ha' been mine, you know."

Theodora choked, as she said in a low tone, "The poor little baby is gone too, and will be buried with the mother to-morrow."

Nell started. "Then Andrew is clear of all that," she said, "and of me too. He can begin business all over again." She laughed a little bitterly, as though some faint self-consciousness had come to her, which made her feel, in spite of all her outward show of decision, that it would not be easy for her to break through the meshes of the moral net in which her life was held. She might protest she would do so, but there was that in her nature which made it im-

possible for her, like him, to "begin all over again." In a moment more, she said, "Well, I'm sorry about the baby. It was a blessing for Annie to die. As for me, I've got to make the best I can of living on."

She turned 'to go, but Theodora touched her.

"Nell," said she, "come and see me sometimes. Let me be your friend. Don't go like that. I've known trouble, too."

At the simple words, Nell's eyes filled with sudden tears.

"Thank you," she said. "I'll come to you once in a while, then. Good-by."

Theodora saw that it would be no kindness to detain her, and stood still watching the lithe, handsome figure, as it moved away, till the gathering gloom of the winter evening wrapped it round and shrouded it from view. Then she turned her steps homeward, saying to that very tired self of hers, "She is beyond my help, and only Joe is left to me."

BRIDGET'S STORY.

WELL, miss, you see the trouble is, Ellen gets a bit religious now an' then, an' spends more time prayin' than may be the Lord requires of a woman as 'as a big family to see to. She's a nice 'oman tho', an' 'as a good 'ead to 'er, steadier nor 'er 'usband's. 'E's stylish-like, an' 'e'd be pleased if she'd go with finer sort o' company nor she do. She just laughs at 'im, an' says, "Oh, bah, John, you'll never catch me a-runnin' after my betters. Them as was good enough for us when we was yoong is good enough now we is old."

"'E'd like me," says she, "to be dressed in satin from Monday to Saturday, let alone Sunday; an' 'ow would the washin' an' the bakin' fare then?"

I think mysel' Ellen had the rights of it. She's just a common, nice body, an' what 'ould be the use o' 'er tricken' 'ersel' out like a gran' leddy? It's only people in this country as try

to make themself's look yoong, an' finer nor their condition. I think it's ridic'lous for owld women to fix themself's out like yoong wenches. I like to see the quality dress up, but it's not allays the gran'est as go the gayest. I remember, in England, the first time the Queen coom to Chatsworth after she was married. The Duke 'ad an eye on the Queen when she was yoong, an' she coom there; an' for five or six weeks before, all the gentry was givin' the owld women round about new petticoats an' new shoes, so 's they should look nice for the Queen to see. I 'ad a sister in service at Chatsworth, an' so we went over there from where we lived in Lancashire. I'm Irish born, you know, but we'd lived in Lancashire since I wur a little child, an' folks say as I spake nayther like the Irish nor the English. I'm just 'alf an' 'alf, a kind of a mixed creatur' at best. I know the Lancashire di-log, but I don't spake it often; my father never liked to hear it in the 'ouse, for he wur an educated man. Well, we took a spring cart an' drove to Chatsworth, the night before the Queen coom, an' we lodged in a public 'ouse, the whole on us in one room, all but my father, as 'ad a friend in the town, an owld man, who took 'im 'ome to 'is 'ouse.

The next day we went to the park, an' they ranged us along to see the sight, with the

smaller children in front. An' when the Queen coom, why, she 'ad on just a black silk gown, with never a flounce nor a tuck on it, — not so much as a tuck. She wore mud boots, too, laced up at the side, an' 'er 'air brought down on 'er forehead, an' then brushed back plain, an' twisted behind 'er 'ead ; not a fashionable knob, nayther, — nothing but a little twist. She coom along, an' behind was the nurse with the Queen's child, carryin' it out *so* in 'er arms ; an' the Queen spoke to the woman, an' she coom close to where we was stan'in', so's I put out my 'and an' touched the child's dress, as was long, an' soft, an' white. She 'eld it down so's we could all see it, an' then another maid took it an' carried it off to show to the people in another part o' the park.

Then two men took the gran' cushions out o' the Queen's carriage, an' lifted all the little lads an' wenches into the carriage. Eh, but they throwed themsel's back an' sat down, afore they were lifted out the other side. They went streamin' in an' out, an' I was among 'em. I have sat in the Queen's carriage !

Aw well, — it's a long road from the Queen at Chatsworth to Ellen McKiernan an' 'er man up 'ere, but now my lines are cast amongst such as the McKiernans.

Mr. McKiernan is a bit yoonger nor she, an'

'e's like a man yoonger nor 'e is, an' that, I think, 'elps to make a little trouble between 'em, off an' on. Then Tom, the eldest boy, is 'is father's idol; but when the lad took to bad ways, drinkin', idlin' nights, an' gamblin', Ellen did not like it, an' fussed about it, while the father, as ought to ha' known better, said, —

“Whisht, let the lad alone. Yoong men must 'ave their fling. I was just like 'im at 'is age.”

“The more shame to you!” cried Ellen, “for tellin' on it afore the childer, an' spakin' light o' the laws of God 'n' man.”

So she turned to Tom, an' says she, “Tom, I worked in the mill day-times, an' I worked in the 'ouse nights, when I was the mother of seven small childer; an' you, as 'as nothin' but a man's part to do in this world, 'ill never know 'ow 'ard a woman's lot can be. I never shirked my work, for I wanted to give you schoolin', an' 'ave you larn a good trade. I kept you at school till you was fourteen, when all your mates went in the mill at twelve year old, an' yoonger; an' now you're twenty, you've larned the machinist's trade, you can do for yersel', an' I won't put up with your coomin' 'ome late nights, makin' a row, bringin' drink and bad company in the 'ouse, an' tachin' bad ways to your brothers an' sisters. If you cannot coom

peaceable, an' in due season, you must go somewheres else to board."

She spoke up pretty fierce, but she 'ad n't no more thought the lad 'ould go away nor she 'ad that the man in the moon 'ould coom down to live wid her. But the father said as if the boy went 'e'd go too; an' then she wur mad, an' says she, —

"Ye'd better be off wid ye, John McKiernan, than stoppin' at 'ome, uphowldin' the boy in bad ways. A man o' your age! Ye'd better be on your knees a-sayin' your prayers."

Then the father an' son marched off, 'oldin' up their 'eads like soldiers; an' they both stopped out late that night, an' coom 'ome a-roarin' an' singin'. John McKiernan is quite a pote; 'e makes little rhymes, an' puts the words in their places so 's the verses coom out right; an' when 'e coom into the kitchen, a-racketin' an' a-knockin' over the chairs in the dark, 'e was singin' away verses about Ellen 'ersel', as 'e'd made up. She 'eared 'im, but she spake never a word, only bolted 'er bedroom door fast; while 'e begins to sing, When I was a Bachelor, an owld Irish song, as I 'ave 'eared my father sing when I was a bit of a girl. There's not manny folk as know it now. I can say it in Irish an' English both. 'E shouted out in the dead o' night, the most aggeravatin' of all the verses : —

"I fancied the mopsey,
Her fortune 'as deceived me,
It makes me cry an' often sigh,
The shirt I cannot wear it.

"When I rise in the morning,
I go to my labor,
I never do coom 'ome,
Till duskes cooms on fairly.

"I find me cabin dirty,
An' me bed, it's in bad order,
Me wife is cabin hearing,
An' me baby always bawlin'."

That was n't a pleasin' song for Ellen to 'ear, an' it wur n't true, nayther; for she's not a mopsey, but a clean, decent body, as keeps a nice 'ouse, an' does n't run round to the neighbors no more 'n is reasonable for a live woman, as does n't expect to wrap 'ersel' up in a sheet, an' keep as distant from folks as a ghost.

When 'e 'ad finished the verses, an' was just beginnin' again When I was a Bachelor, McKiernan tries the bedroom door, an' finds it locked on 'im. So then 'e swears, an' Ellen spakes for the first time, an' calls through the keyhole, —

"I 've got the childer in 'ere, an' I 've spent the night a-prayin' for you. You an' Tom may go up to the attic; an' my counsel is for you to get on yer knees yersel'."

Then there was more row, an' at the last Mr.

McKiernan an' 'is son both posted off ; an' the Lord knows where they passed the night.

In the mornin' the father coom an' fetched 'is clothes an' the lad's, an' they both got board together nigh to the mill, where Mr. McKiernan is a spinner.

Ellen took it pretty lofty at first.

"It's well they 're away," said she. "The owld man was daft about the lad, an' I'll not deny 'e's a 'andsome, well-lookin' boy ; but if there 'd 'a' been a robbery or a murder in the street, an' Tom 'ad been arrested on us, we could not have accounted for 'im, for 'alf the time we did not know where 'e was. As for the man, we 've lived together two an' twenty year, an' now, if 'e's minded to go away, I'll niver go after 'im, nor ask 'im to coom back, — no, not so much as walk by Mrs. Flinn's 'ouse, where 'e boards. I counseled 'im in good ways, an' the ways of the church, an' I'll not make any lamentation because 'e's gone. It's every day such things 'appen, a man leaves 'is woman. Lettin' alone is the best treatment for 'em."

For all 'er talk, I often seed 'er eyes was red, an' she went to church steadier 'n ever, an' she 'ad the childer an' 'ersel' a prayin' a good bit o' the time.

There was another in trouble, too, an' that was little Rosie Roberts, a pretty girl, with yel-

low 'air as looks like a dandelion. She 'd set 'er 'eart on Tom McKiernan, but 'er folks was always agin it. They was pretty 'igh-toned people. The mother kep' a store, an' the father was on the train. They looked 'igh for Rosie, an' the mother watched 'er like a cat. They was Protestants too, an' the difference of religion made troubles both sides. For my part, I think as we all worships the same God, — still, I confess as what he 'as ordained he 'as ordained, an' it 'll stan' forever; an' them as does n't go to mass misses a blessing, sure, as they might 'ave; for the mass is a holy thing as 'ull do any body good, an' not Catholics alone.

I 'm not goin' to say as it's well for Protestants an' Catholics to wed, but I always liked Rosie, an' when I see 'ow 'er 'eart was set on Tom, I was such a great fool as I thought the religion 'ould not make so much 'arm, for she wur not one to argue, an' I wished Tom 'ould behave himsel' an' marry 'er, an' be a good man to 'er, for I does like to see young folks 'appy.

But oh, when Tom was out o' 'is mother's eye, it seemed as if 'e would go to the devil straight, for Mr. McKiernan could no more manage the lad nor a three-year old child could fly a six-foot kite. The boy went from bad to worse, an' Mr. Roberts forbade 'im the 'ouse entirely, an' Rosie's eyes was redder 'n Ellen's.

I coomed by Mr. Roberts' one night, an' I seed Rosie hangin' over the gate, talkin' with Tom, outside. There was a bright moon, an' I seed the sad look was gone from 'er bonny face, which was all dimples an' smiles. But as I was a-staring at 'er, out coom Mr. Roberts, like a turkey gobbler rushin' at a red rag, an' dragged Rosie in, swearin' as she should not go to shame right out of 'er father's door. Tom started after, but Rosie cried out for 'im to go away; an' Missis Roberts an' a lot more women coom out, a-talkin' an' yellin', an' they got the girl in, an' shut the door, an' left Tom outside fightin' wid Rosie's brother.

I coom away then, for I spied the policeman a-coomin' up the street; an' that's a sight as 'as a won'erful power to put a stop to an old woman's curiosity.

I went into Missis Roberts's store the next day, an' Rosie was there, with 'er little sister in 'er lap, — a baby as is fretful, an' always wants summun to be settin' under 'er. Rosie looked very pale, but 'er mother, she was scowlin' and black in the face. The super of the Sunday-school was there, a-sayin', —

“Missis Roberts, I'm very sorry as Rosie should ha' set gossip goin' about 'er.”

Then Missis Roberts rose up to 'er feet an' flung out 'er 'and at the girl, an' says, “There,

Rosie! do ye 'ear that? Perhaps you 'll mind what your mother says after this, an' not wait till the stones in the streets is a hollain' out my very words, an' cryin' shame on ye."

"Oh," said the super, tryin' then to quiet the mother down, "I've no manner o' doubt Rosie 'll be a good girl after this."

'E spoke to the baby, an' 'e said as 'e 'd like to buy some tape, an' so 'e got away; but Rosie said never a word to 'im, only grew whiter 'n' whiter, an' let 'er 'ands fall down at 'er side, so 's the baby 'ad to 'old 'er own little back up.

While the super was buyin' the tape, I said to Rosie, —

"'Ad you been walkin' with Tom, last night?"

"Yes," said she; "we 'd walked from the grocer's. I only met 'im by chance."

"But you like 'im," said I, "an' 'e's a wild lad."

"We never 'ad no love talk," said she; an' then, in a minute more, she spake again: "I 'll never stay 'ere to be talked about."

Then the mother coom back to us, an' I went out o' the store.

Sure enough, the girl runned away, an' then there was more talk than ever about 'er.

Ellen coom out in the middle of the day to tell me, though she was doin' a bleach, an' 'ad

not so much as a shawl about 'er. She 'd just run out in 'er figger. She cried, an' said as 'ow Tom was good enough for any girl in the place: an' one minute she vowed 'e was too good for a girl as 'ould do such a shameful thing as run away from 'ome, an' next she 'd say that Rosie was a sweet innocent thing, an' she 'oped she 'd see 'er Tom's wife yet, an' it was only people's goin' back an' forth an' tellin' things as 'ad ever made any trouble. She was just distraught, an' she said whatever coom into 'er silly 'ead; so at last it coom out that when Tom 'ad 'eared as Rosie was gone 'e 'ad quit work, an' was on a spree then.

"An' I 've not seen 'im," cried 'is mother; "I only 'ear about 'im on the street, — my own eldest born!"

I met Tom a day or two after on the street, an' I went up to 'im, an' laid a 'and on 'is arm. I looked 'im steady in the eye, an' 'e reddened a bit, an' 'is mouth trembled like a baby's.

"Tom," said I, "what 's the use of a fine lad like you goin' to the bad, when 'e might just as easy go to the good, an' make 'is friends all 'appy?"

"It 's not many friends I 'as," said the young fellow. "You know, Bridget, I 'd never 'a' done 'arm to Rosie; but she runs away, when she 'ears 'er name mentioned with mine, as if I was the plague."

"Oh," says I, "you think you'd never 'a' done 'er 'arm; but it's little lads know what they'll coom to do as keeps bad company, an' takes no counsel but their own wild wishes. She runned to save 'ersel', — a wise little body! Go after 'er, Tom, bring 'er 'ome to be your mother's daughter, an' make up your mind once for all to be a decent, steady man."

I don't know what got into me to speak them words, but when 'e 'eared me, first 'e grew white, an' then 'e grew red.

"You're a wise woman," said he, an' 'e walked away, an' the next day they telled me 'e 'ad gone from the town.

The Robertses soon 'eared from Rosie, 'ow she 'ad got a good place with a rich family in Fall River; so they thought it best to leave 'er there. But where Tom was we did not know.

Well, Ellen took it 'ard, an' she seemed to feel the father's bein' away more, now Tom was clean gone; an' yet the man did not coom back. She 'd stan' at 'er door at night, an' strain 'er eyes lookin' towards the mill, where McKiernan worked, but she never see 'im coomin' towards 'er. Eh, but women is queer creatur's, cryin' an' scoldin' an' sputterin', yet lovin' all the while.

She fell sick, bein' so worried, an' one night I stayed wid 'er. I was dozin' in the kitchen,

when I 'eared a great crash; I runned into the other room, an' there Ellen lay on the floor, wid 'er eyes wide starin' open, an' 'er limbs stretched out on the boards, an' in one 'and she 'ad a lock o' 'er own 'air, as she 'd pulled out.

"Oh," cried I, "'ow long 'ave you been there?"

"Whisht, whisht!" says she. "Do ye 'ear the music?"

"Music!" says I. "Are ye mad?"

"Oh," says she, "it's gran' music; an' do ye see the fine yoong ladies as is makin it? There they is, all stan'in' round against the wall. Look at 'em, dressed in white, an' with bells on their fingers!"

She was so wild, I was scared, an' I humored 'er a bit, an' said as I 'eared 'em an' seed 'em, an' coaxed 'er the while back to bed.

She laid 'er 'ead down on the pillow, an' fetched a great sigh. "Ah," says she, "they 're just vanishin', vanishin', an' the music's a-fadin' away."

Then she wrung 'er 'ands an' fell a-cryin', an' I 'ad plenty o' work that night to do, carin' for 'er. But she mended fearful 'at after, an' in a day or two she was quite well.

Then she went to the priest, an' telled 'im all 'er trouble: 'ow Mr. McKiernan 'ad been a good 'usband an' very agreeable to 'er for twenty-two

years, an' 'ow 'ard she thought it as 'e should leave 'er now; an' she towld 'im all about Tom, too.

Father Kent treated 'er very kind, an' says 'e, —

“I cannot 'elp ye about Tom. Yoong men will 'ave their fling; an' any way, 'e's beyond my reach. Ye can do nought but pray for 'im, as was always a mother's work, from the time of the Blessed Virgin. As for your 'usband, I'll see to 'im.”

Ellen coomed 'ome wid a lighter 'eart, an' waited, wid 'er little ones around 'er, for the man as she 'oped soon to see darken 'er door.

Father Kent went twice to the mill to see Mr. McKiernan, an' the second time the man got mad, an' spake up saucy, an' said queer things to the priest.

“I don't doubt, Father Kent,” says 'e, “as you 're a scholard an' a gentleman, an' I knows you 're a priest, but you need n't be meddlin' with me.”

Then Father Kent stamped 'is foot, an' says 'e,

“You 've 'eared what I 'ad to say, McKiernan. Go ye 'ome to your wife, an' don't force me to coom again about this business.”

An' that night Mr. McKiernan went 'ome. Ellen telled me all about it. She wur stan'in' at the table cuttin' out a dress for a neighbor;

for she 's very 'andy at such things, an' willin' to do little jobs o' that sort for anybody. It was about nine in the evenin', an' as she stood with 'er back to the door in stalked Mr. McKiernan, lookin' as sour as a boy as 'as been licked. Ellen's 'eart give a jump, but she never said nothin', nor turned round, only caught a side glance of 'im as 'e went past 'er.

'E sat down in a chair, an' 'e kicked off first one shoe, an' then another; an' all the while 'er scissors wur goin' faster than ever. When 'e 'd sat still about five minutes, up 'e got, an' stamped away to 'is room. Then Ellen turned, an' threw up 'er arms wid a great swoop, an' says she, 'alf aloud, —

“Lord save us, see the ghost!” An' the little childer began to titter at that.

“Shut up,” says she, “laughin' at your dad.”

But little Peter, he giggled on, an' the father growled from the other room; so Ellen caught up the boy, an' rocked 'im, an' hugged 'im, an' got 'im quiet. She was that glad 'er 'usband 'ad coom 'ome, I think, she did not care 'ow mad an' glum 'e acted.

When Mr. McKiernan came out for 'is breakfast, the next morning, Ellen flew to the table, an' began movin' some dishes.

“I'll clear off Peter's things,” said she.

“Oh,” said Mr. McKiernan, “ye like to 'ear

yersel' talk;" an' 'e shoveled in 'is meat, an' said no more, till she asked 'im, timid-like, should she send 'is dinner to the mill.

"Are n't ye the 'ousekeeper?" says 'e, sharp again. "Ye like to 'ear yersel' talk;" an' off 'e went to 'is work.

That afternoon I was goin' by, an' Ellen called me to coom in.

"I must go 'ome an' feed my cat," said I.

She squealed. "Hoot wi' yer cat," says she. "I hunted 'er off o' my chickens the other day. Coom in; it's summat better worth 'earin' nor a cat's meaowin', as I 'ave to tell ye."

So I stopped in, an' she made me laugh till my sides ached a-mimickin' all Mr. McKiernan's gran' ways an' sour looks. But she quit 'er laughin' an' cried a bit, sayin', —

"I'm the wretchedest mother in the town," says she; "an' Father Kent said 'e could not 'elp me about Tom."

So wantin' to cheer 'er, I says, —

"Mr. McKiernan only shows 'is good sense in coomin' 'ome, Ellen. There's not a woman I knows as keeps a cheerfuller kitchen."

"It 'ould not ha' been cheerful long," says she, "if 'e 'ad not coom, for I'm near out o' money."

"Well, 'e *is* coom," says I. "An' now you must keep 'im. What did you send 'im for 'is dinner?"

"Beefsteak," says she, catchin' up little Peter, as 'ad been pullin' at 'er knee, an' suckin' at a lump o' sugar.

"That's right," says I. "Now you must ha' summat good for 'is supper."

"Yes," says she. "What do ye think on?"

"Scollops," says I.

"What's them?" says she, takin' 'old of Peter's 'ands, an' swingin' 'im down to the floor, an' then bringin' 'im up again on 'er knees, an' 'e a-laughin' till 'e almost choked.

"A kind o' fish," says I. "I'll be bound Mr. McKiernan 'ull like 'em. Send Katie down to the market for 'em. They 'll be about thirty cents the quart."

So she said she would; an' I seed she felt quite 'appy, so I picked up my shawl an' the pail of milk I was takin' 'ome, an' trudged on to my cellar an' my cat.

The next day was Sunday, an' as I was on my way 'ome from church, when I got opposite Mr. McKiernan's 'ouse, Ellen, as was stan'in' in the door, not 'avin' took off 'er bonnet, called to me.

"Just stop to dinner, Bridget!" says she.

"Nay, nay," says I. "A family likes to 'ave its Sunday dinner to theirsels."

Her face clouded, but Mr. McKiernan, as was smokin' in the yard, says, —

"Coom in, Bridget; there's always a seat for you at my table."

So seein' 'im so cordial, I went in; an' Ellen, I thought, was glad not to be much alone wid 'im. I sat there till about three, when 'e marches up to 'is wife an' speaks very pleasant, an' says, "Just make me a cup o' tea, Ellen;" an' up she jumps, with smiles all over 'er face, to do it. Then I thought they was gettin' friendly, an' I coomed away.

But she bade me in the very next night, for she said she 'ad to ask 'im for money, an' she felt she'd be bolder to do it if I was by. So Monday evening I was there before duskes. They was always a family as provided well, the way I like to see folks do, — 'alf a barrel o' flour, an' 'alf a keg o' butter, an' a whole ham at a time; but while Mr. McKiernan was off, Ellen had been put to it to keep things up, an' 'ad run low in every way.

After we 'ad 'ad a good supper, she picked up Jimmy, one o' the little boys; an' while Peter hung on 'er knees, she poked 'er fingers careless-like into the 'oles in Jimmy's shoes, till 'e squealed out as she tickled 'im, an' says he, —

"Mammy, I want some new shoes."

"Eh," says I, "let's see the shoes ye've got on."

Then the little fellow twisted round in 'is mother's lap, an' stuck out 'is two feet to me.

"They 're awful bad," says the boy. An' Mr. McKiernan spoke up from the table, where 'e sat readin' an owld paper:

"Why don't you get 'im some shoes, Ellen?"

'E spoke gently, an' Ellen laughed, an' says she, —

"I never knew shoes to coom walkin' into a 'ouse without feet in 'em, or feet goin' after 'em."

"An' money, too," says I.

"Don't ye 'ave no paper now?" says Mr. McKiernan, takin' no notice of what we 'd been a-sayin'.

"No," says Ellen. "There wan't nobody to read it, an' I stopped it."

"Well," says 'e, risin' up, "I'll go an' give an order for one to be left every night, after this."

"That 'll be good," says Ellen, bent on pleasin' 'im, "for I did miss 'earin' you talk about the news."

Then she played some more with Jimmy's shoes; an' says 'e again, like a little parrot, —

"Mammy, I want some shoes."

"Ah," says the mother, "I 'd give you some, quick, if I 'ad the money; but fifty cents won't buy ye shoes, now you 've growed so big. An' fifty cents is all my fortune," says she, her voice just flutterin' a bit, an' she gettin' pretty red.

Then as the man did not speak, she began again, a-singin' with a little tremble, an' pattin' Jimmy's knee, —

“My face is my fortune.”

“Jimmy, my lad, what do you think o' that for an old woman like me? Only my face.”

Mr. McKiernan 'ad got on 'is coat by this time, an' says 'e, in a lofty way, —

“Give me your fifty cents, Ellen, an' I'll give you a ten-dollar bill for it.”

Ye may be sure, she was n't no great time makin' that change; an' 'e went out o' the 'ouse, an' she clapped on 'er bonnet an' shawl, an' started off 'ersel' for the shoes.

They coomed back together, talkin' an' carryin' parcels like a couple of yoong sweet'earts, an' I just laughed at 'em. As we all stood round, with the childer 'angin' on our legs, the door burst open, an' in coom Tom an' Rosie.

“Holloa!” cried Tom; an' Ellen fetched a screech, an' rushed at the lad as if she 'd smother 'im; but Rosie stood apart, with a shy look in 'er eyes an' a blush on 'er cheek, till Tom left 'is mother, an' took the girl's 'and, an' said, like a man, —

“I went after 'er, an' one day, as she was washin' dishes, I coom softly into the kitchen; an' when she looked up she saw me, an' she

cried out, an' let the cup fall as she was oldin', an' it broke, an out coom the missus to know what was the matter; an' I telled 'em both together as I'd made up my mind to be a steady fellow, an' I'd coom to marry Rosie; an' Rosie, she made believe as she did n't care about me, till the missus laughed, an' bade 'er speak the truth; an' then" —

"Now, Tom, you need n't say no more," said Rosie; an' Mr. McKiernan marched up to 'er, an' says, very courteous-like, —

"I'll make ye kindly welcome to be my son's wife."

"Eh, but she's that already!" cried Tom. "We was married a week ago."

Everybody screamed but Ellen, who just throwed 'er arms round the girl's neck an' hugged 'er 'ard.

VALENTINE'S CHANCE.



I.

THE May day was so soft and warm that Dr. John Valentine flung himself on the ground, at the edge of the pond. Alder and oak bushes shaded his head. Swamp lands rose just above the surface of the water, and with their wet greenness hid from his eyes the current of the river, whose gentle ripples defined its course through the smoother waters. Valentine's boat was moored near him, its keel well aground in the shallows. Behind him a steep bank rose to the level of the fields, which sloped away to the village. The river changed its direction when it left the pond, and cut the village in halves; then turned again, and sought the southern tide waters.

Valentine stared a moment at a robin which stood with an erect head near his feet, and then took out a block of paper and began to write. He was a wealthy youth, and neglected his

office hours to scribble. Failure had not seared his faith, and he believed that what he so ardently longed to say some one must really need to hear. An unuttered thought seemed to him like a seed that does not germinate, something wasted. He came of a country family of good standing in an inland Massachusetts district. His people were the "best people" of the neighborhood, and the lad had grown up among kinsfolk who read good books and exercised a generous social spirit, although they lived simply, and kept a healthy interest in the soil, in seed-time and harvest, in cattle and in trees. Thus between the influences of nature and culture, he grew refined, sensitive, emotional, and well-bred. He had had enough town life to perfect, but not enough to wear away, the outlines of his character. Noble manners and real thoughts had held such authority in the life with which he was familiar, that the rules by which conventional people govern themselves seemed chiefly amusing to him. An inheritance of anti-slavery blood contributed to render easy his disregard of trammels. He had never learned to be afraid of his own individuality, but his sweet nature had hindered him from thinking it necessary to assert that individuality by being disagreeable. A self-analyzing tendency was the one thing in him which endan-

gered his growth in sunny and vigorous manhood. Here lay the germ of possibly morbid action or ruinous introversion.

The robin sped away, and Valentine wrote on through the May afternoon, till steps sounded from the narrow path which led along the bank half-way up the slope, and a girl's voice, odd and sweet, broke upon the quiet. Valentine perceived that she was speaking the Canadian patois. Suddenly, there was the noise of some one slipping, tearing at the bushes, and then a man came crashing down and fell headlong, muttering an oath, at Valentine's feet. The girl gave a quick cry and darted after him.

"Jack and Jill," said the doctor, rising in amazement. But the girl had not fallen, although she was already on her knees beside the man. Valentine lifted the fellow up and set him against the bank, and looked at him with disgusted interest.

"He drunk," said the girl in a matter-of-fact tone.

The man did not seem to be hurt, but very much dazed.

"What you bring me to such a place for, Rose Beauvais?" he asked, stupidly accusing her in French. "Of course I fall."

"Well, you sit still now," she answered

calmly. "Don't you go home till night. Then no one will see how horrid you look. Promise me."

He turned his great, beautiful eyes on her. The smile that crossed his lips, though silly with intoxication, still had something of the flashing radiance mingled with sweetness so characteristic of the smiles of his race.

"I don't know," he said.

She looked in the man's face, and replied in an unmoved tone, "I know."

Valentine watched her curiously. She seemed to be about fifteen years old. She wore a coarse dark jersey and a short calico skirt. Her shoes were rough and tied with strings. She put a thin, long hand on the Canadian's shoulder. There were flecks of cotton on her jersey and the factory stain was on her fingers, but there was a peculiar youthful grace in her figure and motions.

"You will stay," she said, and the Canadian nodded. She stood up then, and for an instant her eyes met Valentine's frankly. To his surprise, he felt a momentary awkwardness and was overcome by a sense that he had been *dé trop* in this scene.

"Can I do anything for you?" he asked hastily.

She answered, "No," in English, and to the

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other continued in French, "You stay here, Frank, and I'll bring you some supper."

The man was too drowsy to reply. She regarded him with serious but undisturbed gaze. It struck the doctor that drunkenness might be a familiar factor in her life. She turned away at last, and without any parting salutation went along the river bank towards the village. Valentine spoke to the Canadian, but receiving no response picked up his writing materials from the dirt, climbed the bank, and crossed some fields to the road, and to a farm-house on the opposite side. This farm-house stood a little distance from the village, and the farm belonging to it extended on both sides of the road, forming a portion of the country dividing the Blackbird Hollow village from the town above it. Valentine boarded at this house. It was not a good place for his practice, but he was indifferent to that, his stay in the village being in the nature of an experiment preparatory to his serious settling down to professional life.

The evening continued mild, and a little before sunset Valentine seated himself in a hammock under a spreading apple-tree, whose buds were beginning to show themselves pink in the balmy air.

He was reading Miss Burney's Letters by the fading light, when a little wagon came up the

path, drawn by a white goat. A rosy girl, wearing an unnecessarily warm red hood, sat on the corner of the wagon and drove. Two big buckets were the freight. Two dark-eyed boys walked at the goat's head, and ever and anon tugged at the animal to make her go faster. A girl, whom Valentine recognized as the Rose Beauvais whom he had seen in the afternoon, walked behind the absurd equipage. A little boy in petticoats ran out from the house, his short yellow curls dancing all over his head and shining in the light.

"Oh, the *swell* boys have come!" he cried, and joined the children as they went on to the barn. Valentine had seen them before. They gathered up swill in the village, and brought it to Farmer Pettingell's pigs. Rose did not go to the barn, but after loitering in an aimless way near the kitchen door for a few minutes, sat down on the step.

Mrs. Pettingell came out of the house, bringing a pitcher and tumbler.

"Have some buttermilk?" she called to Valentine.

"Yes, thank you."

As he took the glass, he inhaled the odor of new-made butter which clung about her hands. When he had drunk, she beckoned to Rose, and poured out some milk for her in the tumbler which Valentine had just emptied.

"I guess I'll get some doughnuts for them children," said she, and went into the house.

Valentine glanced at Rose, and decided that she was not very pretty. She had very luminous, soft eyes, but she was pale. Even the lips lacked color, though they were beautifully cut, and her features were a little thin. Her black hair was braided and scarcely reached her shoulders. A perfectly straight bang covered her forehead. She held a package in one hand.

"Is that the supper for that man?" asked Valentine, at last. It did not seem necessary to use any ceremony with her. She flushed, and drew her fingers across her lips.

"Yes."

"Do you think he has stayed where you left him?"

"Oh, yes. He be afraid to go away."

"Afraid of what?"

She smiled as if she did not mean to tell, and Valentine asked, —

"Who is he?"

"He Joe's brudther."

"And who is Joe?"

"Oh, Joe, — a machinist in the Jeffreys mill. He come first. So when the brudther come, work in machine shop too, ev'rybody not know his name. The boss, ev'rybody, call him Joe's brudther. Only we, — we call him Frank."

"You knew him before?"

"Yes, in Canada. Always."

What an odd, sweet note was in her voice! A light came into her eyes.

"She is pretty, after all," thought the young man, and he said aloud, "He's a bad fellow. Not good company for you."

She laughed, and turned her body slightly, without moving her feet. Here, the children came rushing back with the goat and empty buckets, calling to her as they passed, — dark, rosy creatures, whose vivid coloring made the American child toddling after them look insipid.

"You go home!" she cried. "I come by and by." She turned back to Valentine, and spoke quietly: "No, Joe's brudthter not bad fellow." It was evidently a little difficult for her to find and utter the words she wanted. Her pretty lips seemed to stumble over the sounds. "He never got drunk before. Something trouble him. He feel bad. He no work to-day. Some fellows get him off, — tease him. He tell me. It lucky I fine him. I make him stay in the woods. He do so no more. It be all right."

Again that flashing smile, so bright, so unintelligent. Valentine did not feel pleased. At this moment, little Bobby Pettingell, tired of following the goat-wagon with ineffectual feet, came up the path crying. Rose led him to the

kitchen door. His mother met them, and he extended his tiny arms far beyond his sleeves, and turned up a tear-stained face, saying, "Please do sumfin' to comfort me."

Rose came slowly back to the apple-tree.

"Do you work in Mr. Jeffreys' mill?" asked Valentine.

"Yes."

"You were not at work to-day."

"No, they fix the looms; so I stay out to-day. Monday, I go in."

"Do you like to work?"

"I no mind in winter. Like to be in mill as much as anywhere then. Only getting up in morning, — so cold and dark. I think that bad. My fadther have to come up an' wake me."

"And in summer?"

"Oh," she cried, with soft energy, "I like to be out-doors in summer, an' feel the air. I guess I lazy. Celia," she went on, "s'e sit in the sitting-room, an' we have an organ, an' s'e play on it. An' Georgine sew the clothes, when s'e not in the mill, an the little girls sweep up an' mind the baby, but I never stay in the house. I stand by the gate, an' see the people, an' go in the woods, an' look at the sky."

She smiled, as if she thought herself both whimsical and amusing.

"What kind of work do you do?"

"I weave. I run six looms. White goods. I could n't do the colored goods. So much harder. That would make me sick."

These words called his attention to the dark shade under her eyes.

"I must go now," she said at last, paused, then added, "You not tell about Joe's brud-ther?"

"No. Good-by, Rose."

He nodded, felt ashamed of his scant courtesy, touched his hat, grew suddenly more ashamed, and went hurriedly into the house, saying to himself, "She has real beauty even now. She may grow to be very beautiful, but I suppose she will marry that drunken fellow and get coarse."

Poor Frank was sober enough when Rose reached him; that is, he was sober enough to cry and say that he was sure Celia would never speak to him now, seeing that she was mad at him before, just because Georgine said she saw him talking with that Rosalba Pluff, — and it was not he that was with her; it was Joe. "Celia don't like men that drink," he remarked, as if it was a peculiar taste on her part.

"You 'd better not drink, then," said Rose coolly.

"But this time," he answered dejectedly, "it would shame me to hide it." He sighed, then rose like a man. "I was a fool," he muttered. "I will go tell her I was a fool."

"I don't dare not tell her," he added in a puzzled tone. "Celia is not like other girls. I could n't lie to her."

"Well, I think you'd better tell her," said his companion.

They went to the village together. The Beauvais family lived in a square old house, with a big elm and two old pines standing in the yard. Celia sat alone on the doorstep. She was a brown-haired woman, with soft gray eyes, a square chin and cheek, and a large, sweet mouth. She had not so much beauty as her young lover had, but she was pleasant to look upon. Rose stopped at the gate. Frank went up to Celia.

"I have been lonesome," he faltered, and then told all his misery and his error. Rose looked over her shoulder at intervals to see how matters progressed, and when at last Frank sat down by her sister she whirled about and came demurely towards them. Celia's eyes were moist. Frank's cheeks were very red. He smiled like a child at Rose.

"I feel good," he said.

II.

On Memorial Day the French Canadians of Blackbird Hollow held a picnic in the pine grove that skirted the southern bank of the river and extended along the side of the pond. Curiosity led Valentine to the scene. The amusements were of the ordinary kind. There was a pig to be given to the person who guessed nearest to its exact weight. Some boys were shooting at a target. Dark-skinned young fellows exchanged laughing impertinences with dark-eyed girls. Men and women chatted. Children ran about. A crowd gathered round a platform where there were music and dancing. Everybody had a foreign color and air. Only the solemn pines and the brilliant blue sky looked American.

Valentine wandered about till he discovered Rose Beauvais, who stood a little apart from those who were watching the dancers. One or two boys went up to her, and he saw her shake her head to them. After some irresolute moments he walked across the little hollow shaded by hemlocks that divided him from her.

"Why don't you dance?" he asked.

"I not know how."

"You could learn."

"I not want to learn. They say, 'Come, we show you.' I not want to be shown."

He looked at her curiously, till a low, clear voice broke on his ear.

"Jack!"

He turned to receive Miss Jeffreys' outstretched hand. She smiled at him from her father's side; a tall, fair woman, whose blonde hair grew low on her forehead, so that she could push it back, and still have a soft, fluffy effect of gold under her broad hat. Valentine knew her well. Usually, when they met, they talked about music, for which each had a fancy, that each supposed to be a passion. Now she exclaimed at the beauty of the French Canadians. While she spoke Rose glided away.

"See those two girls," said Miss Jeffreys. "Don't they make you think of plump pigeons?"

Joe's brother was approaching, with a girl dressed in blue upon his arm. Behind him came another man, with a fair girl in a gray gown. The men were not quite at their ease, but the women held their heads calmly erect. Both wore big hats and showy gilt bracelets, and carried their gloved hands folded in front of their round, firm waists.

"The blonde is the prettier," said Miss Jeffreys. "She looks like a very amiable heifer. But what a face the other has! So serious and fine."

Mr. Jeffreys spoke: "They are the daughters of Beauvais, one of our carpenters. That girl who was here when we came up is another. One is a bride, I believe. Did you notice her slippers? French Canadian brides always go around in slippers. There is Beauvais, now."

He pointed to a heavily built man holding two little girls by the hand.

"Oh, I know the little girls!" cried Miss Jeffreys, going up to them. Pretty soon she returned, leading the children. "Now sing," said the lady.

They looked shyly at each other, giggled, and then two sweet, childish voices rang out, singing a little song, beginning, —

"Travaille bien, chère petite,
Enfile ta première aiguille."

The people near by stopped their talking to listen. Beauvais's wife, a plump, matronly woman, carrying a small child, joined her husband. Valentine stared at Rose, who came to her mother's side. He had begun to take in the fact that it was the girl in blue who was Frank's bride.

"I like the French people," said Mr. Jeffreys, when the children had stopped singing, and the group had melted away. "But all that the girls think of is to get hats with big feathers. You should see how dirty they keep their houses."

"Dirt is picturesque," said his daughter.

"A stale sentiment!" retorted her father. "We can't keep the tenements from being indecently full. They take boarders, and pretend they're all one family. But they are quick and intelligent, and save money, which they take back to Canada. They don't come here to stay. Have you ever noticed how few old people there are among them? They leave them in Canada, and go back to them. That Beauvais family, now, — I understand they are going home this summer."

That evening Valentine wandered restlessly to the pond, and rowed across to the village. The sky, where the sunset flash lingered, was clearly reflected in the water. His boat glided between two expanses of color. No being but his own seemed to breathe with conscious life. The birds which sought their nests flew like automata from shore to shore. The young oaks on one side, the pines on the other, stood like crayon sketches against the sky. Nothing was real to him but his own existence.

He landed and made his way through the streets, lined with factory tenements. Here was life enough, — laughter and speech, whispers and cries; but as he moved among it all his own individuality grew only more awfully distinct. He could not fuse his soul with what he saw.

He came at last to the house where Beauvais lived. The yard was filled with happy loungers. Celia sat on the doorstep by her husband. Rose was in her accustomed place by the gate.

"Good-evening," he said ; but she only smiled, and he passed on.

Three evenings later he rowed again to the village shore, and as he approached the land, saw Rose's little figure sitting on a stone, near the tree where he was wont to tie his boat. The sunset light showed the beautiful curves of her mouth and the soft glow in her eyes. He rested on his oars a moment. He wanted to make her come out on the water with him. He vaguely felt that if he could row her away from that accursed, tenement-lined shore, out among the grasses that grew in the shallows of the pond, he could then and there discover what manner of girl God had made her to be. He knew he must not take her. He knew it would be something very like a sin to ask this Canadian child to row with him. She might go with rude and common boys, and her sweet innocence be unblamed, but not with such as he.

When he got out of the boat he dallied a moment, stooping over her.

"Why did you not tell me that it was your sister whom Joe's brother was going to marry?" he demanded.

She raised her great eyes. "You not know that?" she asked, and stood up, putting her hands behind her. Hers was the charm which belongs to all girls, of high or low degree, in whose personality plays an elusive element. Her manner evermore suggested that she might be different from what she seemed; perhaps subtler, perhaps simpler, but with the odds in favor of the more attractive hypothesis of mystery. Withal, her smile was childlike, quick to come, and very sweet, and the man who saw it that night was young.

"Why did you come here?" he asked at last. He was always asking her questions.

She hesitated, then said, "I like to see the water."

He smiled. "And did you think I might row up and bring you some candy? Here I am, and here is the candy. You'd better give some of it to the bride."

They turned together towards the village. "This is my way," he said, pointing to a path leading in a direction opposite to hers. She seemed to take this as dismissal, and ran away without a parting word. He opened his lips to call her back, but seeing that he was very near the rear of a big tenement house he closed them without uttering a sound.

III.

Frank and Celia kept up their wedding festivities for several days, and then resumed their ordinary labors in the Jeffreys mill and machine-shop. The bridegroom took up his abode with the Beauvais family, and they were all jolly together. They liked to play on various cheap musical instruments, and to dance, and they did not mind it at all if the feet of the dancers left dust on the floors. Nobody cared much about sleeping, either; or if anybody wanted to sleep, he was able to do it, no matter how much mirth and noise disturbed the nights. Rose alone held herself a little apart. She had never been quite able to mingle her feelings freely with those of others.

"I don't like so many people about," she said to herself. "One says one thing, and another says another thing, and it makes a fuss. I don't like it."

Georgine lived as though laughter were a synonymous term for life. Celia had a deeper nature, but its serene poise was even more removed from Rose's sensitiveness than from the blonde sister's content. She loved her husband. She liked her home. She was pleased with her two new gowns, and especially delighted in some sheets and pillow-cases, which she had stitched very neatly, and finished on her wedding day.

One morning, a week after his marriage, Frank was ordered to go to one of the upper rooms in the mill, to do some repairing. On his way to the staircase, he saw that some casks had just been placed on the baggage lift. A man had once been employed to run this elevator, but a looseness of discipline combined with an effort at economy prevailed in the management, and he had been assigned other tasks which prevented his constant attendance to his first duty. As a consequence, anybody went up or down who had freight in charge.

"I'll take that stuff up," said Frank to the young fellow who was preparing to mount.

"All right," returned the other, and passed on.

A moment later, there came some frightful creaking sounds, then a crash, and then a cry of horror as everybody in the room rushed forward. The lift had fallen, and Frank's body lay in the wreck. They dragged him out.

"My God, who will tell his wife?" groaned the superintendent, Mr. Lucas, as he bent over the young man's mangled figure.

No one knew who did tell her. She was in a distant building, but somehow she heard, and when Mr. Lucas went for her he met her running between the whizzing machines. He caught hold of her.

"Be as quiet as you can," he commanded.
"Frank is living still."

She saw the blood that was splashed over his hands, and she threw them from her with a cry, and fled past him out into the breathless sunshine. Bearers had carried the man home. Frank was lying on the bed. Valentine and an older surgeon were at work. The rooms were full of pale men and sobbing women. Mr. Lucas presently came in, and drew Celia, all shivering and shaken, from the bedside.

"Do you understand me?" he said, holding her by the shoulders. She shook her head. Rose stepped forward.

"I can understand. I can tell her what you say, Mr. Lucas."

"Then tell her," said he, "that she can help Frank more than any one, if she will be quiet. She must not cry. She must" — But here Mr. Lucas began himself to cry, and stopped. Rose repeated his words in rapid French. The man had never seen such a look as that with which Celia listened.

"If she is excited," he choked out, "Frank will be excited. He will have fever. He will die. Do you make her understand?"

Rose translated again. Celia shuddered, straightened herself, and went back to Frank's side.

"She 'll do," said Mr. Lucas, and walked into the pantry to wash his hands.

Frank's skull was broken, and he had sustained other injuries. The mother brought old sheets, and Rose tore them in strips under Valentine's direction. The doctors worked with grave faces. Mr. Lucas stood in the doorway, and kept out the crowd who would have pressed in.

The physicians finished their labor and went away. Mr. Lucas took charge of all necessary matters. Beauvais and Joe and two other men were detailed to act as nurses. Celia sat all the time by her husband. Her hair was bound in crimping-pins and covered with mill dust. She leaned forward, and held Frank's hands. He moved more restlessly and moaned more painfully, if she relaxed her grasp. When she perceived this, there came into her face a dumb, steadfast patience. At night the family were provided with bedrooms in another part of the house, but Rose stole back in the darkness, and crouched on the floor by her sister. She was there at midnight, when Valentine came in. He did not speak to her, but he carried away a vivid remembrance of her wide, childish, pained eyes.

Celia was in the same place in the morning, when the doctors came again, but she had

brushed her hair smooth. That one night had elevated the character of her face into something very pure and sweet. It flashed across Valentine that the typical Madonna was a peasant woman. Then he looked at Rose, and fancied that he saw the hint of a similar womanliness on her brow.

"You must go and rest," he said to Celia. She obeyed him, going with a slow motion to another room. It was her own bedroom, but they had moved the bed, with Frank on it, out into the sitting-room, so that the little chamber was nearly empty. She lay down on a hard lounge, which stood against the wall. As soon as Valentine had gone she came back to her chair, and took Frank's hands again in hers. Rose whispered to her, but she shook her head, and turned her eyes on her husband.

Miss Jeffreys came in, bringing some beef tea, and as Frank could not take it she coaxed Celia to drink. Her coaxing was done by gestures, as she could not speak the Canadian dialect; and indeed, she could not speak at all, when she looked at Celia, for crying.

"I never saw any one like her," she said to Valentine, when she met him a few hours later. "She realizes the ideal peasant woman of whom I have read, with her strong, sweet nature. I would rave if I were in her place. I should

think she would curse us. It was such a horribly needless accident."

Another time, when Miss Jeffreys rose to leave the house, which she visited every few hours, Celia followed her, dog-like and dumb, into the entry. She put her hand into the lady's, and Miss Jeffreys, in an agony of sympathy, passed her arm around the girl's waist. Then Celia dropped her brown head on the other's shoulder, and cried. Miss Jeffreys hated herself, because she did feel as if it were strange that she should be there holding this Canadian workwoman in her arms, and yet, all the while, she thanked God that she had been able to make that silent heart turn to hers. But it was only a moment before Celia raised her head, like one who dares not wholly yield to an emotion, mastered a pitiful smile, and went back to Frank.

The third day brought a delusive gleam of hope. When Valentine came in the morning, Celia sat at the breakfast table, and smiled with quick gratitude. Rose was eating, too. The young doctor went hurriedly into the patient's room. He did not like to see Rose putting a piece of pork into her mouth with a big knife. Celia followed him, and hung over her husband's poor, disfigured face, once so handsome.

"He knows her. He glad to see her," said Rose, coming to the doorway.

Valentine glanced from the wife to the sister. All that there could be of womanly tenderness and girlish softness seemed expressed in their two faces. Were table manners more important than the best of human virtues? He went about his bandaging with an impatient gesture.

At noon Frank's condition was not so good, and towards night it grew worse. Celia seemed unconscious of the change.

"He wants me all the time," she said quite happily to her mother, when Valentine was there. He had not the courage to undeceive her, and after giving his directions went out with an aching heart. He found Rose sitting on the doorstep, smiling in the level sunshine. He stopped.

"You like being out of the mill, don't you?"

"Oh," she said, "if Frank was not hurt!"

Something stirred within him like a yearning pain. He was under no delusion as to the daily habits and thoughts of this girl. He knew the narrow scope of her ideas, — worse still, he knew the methods of her toilet; and yet his heart moved towards her, as she sat there with her sad, sweet eyes. It was a lovely June day, and one in which a young girl should delight.

"I am going to row home," he said, "and I want to send a package back for Frank. Come with me."

So Valentine's desire fulfilled itself, and at last he had this girl of alien race and caste alone with him, gliding across the pond while cool, soft airs blew about. She sat in the stern, her hands lying in her lap. She wore a pretty gown, which Miss Jeffreys had given her that morning. It was a simple affair that had belonged to a school-girl sister of the lady's, but it was pink with a white *guimpe*, and it made Rose look as if she were the same kind of damsel that Jack Valentine had been used, in college days, to row over still waters and between green pastures. Her happy eyes shone darkly. Primitive instincts surged within him. He was sorry, when they reached the landing-place, that this dangerous half hour was over, and yet at the same instant felt thankful that he had been preserved from making a fool of himself.

As they climbed the steep path up the little hillside, he did not know whether to offer her assistance. He was not sure she would understand such attention, and while he doubted she ran lightly up, and he had no choice but to follow in awkward silence.

When they reached the house, Valentine brought from his office a little box, and gave it to Rose with a message for Celia. She was going home by the road, and he stood under the apple-tree, and watched her walk down the path and disappear behind some syringa bushes.

"Civilization," he muttered, "is a constraining power. I can imagine a state of existence in which I should run after her."

An hour later he saddled his horse, and rode out to some hills overlooking the level country. His soul gazed before him into darkness, and he felt no certainty that folly or guilt did not lie hidden in its depths. It seemed preposterous that things should have come to such a pass with him. Great sweeps of youthful emotion rushed over him, and brought half glimpses of truths or fancies, such as he had not hitherto known. He became conscious that his soul was struggling in a crisis more awful than that relating alone to a personal passion for a young girl.

At last he checked his horse, and stared at the silent heavens. Then he said to himself that the feeling which assumed the guise of a tempting fiend was nevertheless an angel, showing him how near akin human beings are to each other in spite of all difference of rank or culture. He must not love this girl, but he would learn from the impulse which drew him to her humbly to recognize the elemental tie which binds the race together; the tie whose vital strength had made it possible for her soft beauty to sink into his soul, notwithstanding the infinite space between her lot and his.

When he went that evening to see Frank, he found the older surgeon in the bedroom. It was evident to everybody now that the poor fellow must die soon. At midnight Valentine was again at the house. Celia stood fanning her husband with one hand, and with the other trying to soothe and control his restless fingers. She looked wan and old. Georgine was helplessly crying, regarding Frank from the foot of the bed. Rose and one of the little girls knelt on the floor. The mother sat near a table where a lamp was burning, and read prayers aloud. The nurses passed in and out, and in the kitchen a number of people were gathered.

Valentine took his place near the doorway, and after a while a dark, handsome woman came to his side. She nodded towards Celia, and let a tear run down her cheek.

"Ain't s'e strong," said she, "to stand there so many hours? I could n't bear that, if it was my husband."

Georgine came over to them and sobbed, mis-using pronouns, after the manner of French Canadians little learned in English, "S'e will die soon. S'e wife will die, too."

A mist swam across Valentine's brain. He looked from Celia to Rose, and moved over to the open window and gazed out. The stars shone, and in the street some one was passing

with a lantern. The words that the mother was reading made their way into his consciousness. He turned back to the room, and sat down. He wanted to kneel with those who prayed. The mystery of death oppressed him. At that moment it did not seem like a solution of the mystery of life.

At last the mother's voice ceased. She closed her book, laid it on the table, and crossed to Celia's side. The breathing of the dying man was audible in the hush. Rose got up from her knees, and came near Valentine. He touched the white sleeve of her pink gown.

"You must make Celia go out of the room. This will kill her," he whispered.

The girl shook her head. All the glitter was gone from her eyes.

"No, s'e will stay. My fadther cannot make her go. S'e feel so much."

As the dawn gleamed above the factory roofs Celia suddenly uttered a low moan, threw up her hands, and fell back. Her mother caught her, and with Valentine's aid carried her into the little chamber. When Celia opened her eyes again, Frank was dead.

IV.

Valentine went out into the early morning. He turned the corner of the house to go behind it, through the grove, and found Rose crouched under the pines in the yard. She raised a white face to his. His nerves quivered. He heard his own voice, as if it were another's, low and passionate. In a moment more he found himself hurrying through the woods. She remained behind, with her head dropped in her hands. He had kissed her on the lips.

He did not tell himself afterwards that a blameless sympathy had prompted that kiss. He denounced himself rather as that most unworthy creature, a man who makes love to a girl he will not marry. His self-disgust intensified his passion, and he took this experience seriously, because his moral nature mingled in its elements.

On the day of the funeral, before the family left the house, Celia sat patiently on the bed, which had been moved back into her little chamber. She was shrouded in crape. A roll of crape — furnished by Mr. Jeffreys — lay on the kitchen table, and Orselia, the handsome young woman who had stood in the doorway with Valentine the night that Frank died, cut long streamers and decorated the hats of the bearers. Carriages waited outside.

Joe, who was now called "Frank's brother" by the people, wrung Beauvais's hand, and said in rapid French, "Ah, everything is fine, but it does not console me."

Rose felt a little important, and held her head with some dignity. Georgine's comeliness was obscured by weeping, but she was satisfied with the splendor of the occasion. This splendor was rather superficial. The kitchen needed to be swept, and the bed on which Celia sat had not been made that day. It was, however, easy to forget the slovenly setting of the poor little show when one looked at her silent face. Other people moved, and spoke in low but excited tones; she was perfectly still.

At the last moment, Georgine found her little sister Laura sitting in the wet sink in the pantry, helping herself, with sticky fingers, to cold potatoes and bacon fat. Georgine bounced the child down on to the floor, swept off the slimy matter adherent to the back of her frock with a gesture that suggested discipline, and dragged her back to the kitchen.

The bearers lifted the coffin to carry it out, and the women began to wail; all but Celia, who shut her lips tightly. The crowd poured slowly and decorously into the open air. Beauvais led Celia to a carriage, then went back and locked the empty tenement behind him.

Valentine was at the church. Miss Jeffreys was there also, but he would not go near her, and took a seat on the side aisle. She glanced at him, with contracted brows, while he looked steadfastly towards the altar. The service proceeded, and occasionally a sob broke forth among the congregation. At last the priest came down the aisle, stood at the head of the coffin, and sprinkled the dead man's face with holy water. A boy who was with the priest, and who swung the censer, had the face of a young angel, grave and sweet. The rite seemed very solemn to Valentine. To his imagination it symbolized the oneness of this life and that beyond the grave. It asserted that the spirit of man is subject to the same conditions here and hereafter. Valentine realized then that his own soul was essentially in eternity that hour no less than was the soul that had fled from the body in the coffin. As the beautiful boy waved the censer, and the incense faintly darkened the air, there was no longer any noise of crying in the church.

Miss Jeffreys passed Valentine in the porch, when the ceremonies were over. "Did it not make you feel a great deal?" she asked. "Are you not coming?" But he stood still, and let her go on.

He saw Rose, at last, who for some reason

had not yet entered a carriage. He went near her, and she looked at him strangely. She was paler than ever, and her long black gown gave her a womanly air and added a moonlight effectiveness to her sadness and her beauty.

June was still lovely in the land, when Valentine, very early one morning, leaned out of his window, and heard the low sound of a human voice joining in that matin song with which every bird of earth and air was straining its throat. He went out-of-doors, and followed the voice till he came to a little clump of shrubbery not far from the house. There he found Rose sitting on the grass, behind a tall York rose-bush. She was singing softly, —

“Travaille bien, chère petite,”

and pulling a flower to pieces. She did not move as he approached.

“You are out early,” he said. She threw on the ground the white rose with which she had been playing. “Not a factory bell has rung yet,” he persisted. “Does your father wake you at this hour?”

She stood up then, and spoke: “I cannot sleep as I used. First I wake, then I dream. I see Frank. So I come out of the house, to the fields.”

He looked at her with a troubled gaze, from

which she turned quickly. He put his hand on her shoulder. She covered her face and trembled. He remembered that he had kissed her, and took away his hand. The fear shot through his inconsistent soul that this girl might yet prove a greater burden to his conscience than to his heart. He stooped and picked up the rose she had thrown at his feet; then turned to the bush, and gathered some sprays heavily laden with white blossoms and pink-tinged buds. When he looked again at Rose, she had raised her head and regarded him with wet eyes.

"I go to the mill now," she said, and at that moment the factory bells clashed through the misty, golden air. "I go to the mill," she repeated.

They faced each other, these two young creatures, who had nothing in common but their youth and a strange, inward yearning toward each other.

When the bells had ceased the noise that seemed to emphasize the difference between them, he put the roses in her hands, and said, "Take them home. Give them to Celia."

An angry flash gleamed in her eyes. He frowned back unconsciously. In a moment the savage look died out of her face. Her hands, laden with the roses, drooped with a pathetic gesture of obedience.

"Yes," she said. "S'e will like them."

Something tugged at his heart. He moved towards her, but her childish docility bore her from him. She turned, and drifted submissively away. He watched her in a sort of stupid amazement. When she was quite gone he flung himself at the foot of the York rose, and as the fatal mill bells rang again buried his face in the grass, and sobbed with self-disgust and pain. It seemed to him unmanly to love a girl and let her go like that; but whether the unmanliness lay in the love or in the letting go he could not tell.

V.

Valentine thankfully seized upon a pretext for going away on a visit, and was absent several weeks. When he returned to Blackbird Hollow, he learned that Mr. Jeffreys had paid over to Celia a considerable sum of money, and that the whole Beauvais family had departed to Canada. Hearing this, he reflected again upon the impotent part he had played in relation to Rose, and the reflection did not increase his satisfaction with life or with himself. Her removal from him had the effect upon his mind of releasing her image from vulgar associations, and relegating it to a visionary realm of sentiment. He thought of her as if she were a dis-

embodied spirit, and ceased mentally to picture her earthly surroundings. She had gone from them to unknown regions. He did not struggle against this idealizing process. He flattered himself that through it his passion would fade into a tender memory, and was surprised to find fierce gusts of emotion occasionally sweep over him. He strove to believe that it was best that circumstances had arbitrarily closed the affair, since, had it been left to him further to determine events, she must have been the chief victim of any mistake he made. It was perhaps a little significant, however, that he took pains to ascertain the name of the Canadian town to which Beauvais had gone. He did not act on this information when obtained, but threw up his practice, and went with friends to the Adirondacks.

One night in early September, at about eleven o'clock, Valentine was driven rapidly up to the station at Mountain Junction. He jumped from the buckboard, lifted down his portmanteau, watched the driver turn his horses, then went into the waiting-room, and found no one there but the red-bearded night agent. Valentine was on his way to meet Miss Jeffreys and her father, and go with them deep into Maine. He stepped up to make some inquiries of the agent, and was told that his train

was an hour late. He received the information with a whistle, deposited his valise on a settee, and walked to the door of the ladies' waiting-room.

A girl sat near the farthest window. She was dressed in black, and her hair was knotted in the back of her neck. He could see the line of her averted cheek, and had a glimpse of her ear and throat. His heart leaped.

"What a fool I am!" he muttered, and advanced a step. She turned at the sound, and he saw that it was Rose Beauvais who looked at him, her pale, clear face, her dark eyes, gleaming as they had so often gleamed upon his fancy. It seemed another midnight dream.

"Rose!" he said.

She did not speak, but kept her eyes fixed on him till the slow tears filled them.

He took her in his arms. "What is it?" he murmured, trying to hold her, but she slipped from him, and sat down and cried again.

"I — silly," she said at last, struggling for self-control, and looking like Celia, as she struggled.

"How came you here?" he demanded, hanging over her, aching to caress her.

When she could speak, she told him. She had been visiting an aunt in the States, had not accompanied her family to Canada, was on her

way alone to rejoin them. The train in which she came arrived at Mountain Junction at three o'clock in the previous afternoon. She got out to change cars, felt ill, fainted in the waiting-room, and lost her train. There would not come another which she could take till seven in the morning. She knew of nothing to do but stay there. Some rough men frightened her in the earlier part of the evening, but the station-master spoke to them. Now, she had been alone for a number of hours. She spoke with tremulous little gasps.

"I so lonesome," she said, "when you come in, it startle me, and I cry."

He would have drawn her to him, but she crept back into the corner of the seat. Then it came over him with great force that the man who will not love must respect. He rose hastily, and went out on the platform. The agent followed, anxious for conversation. After a while Valentine looked again into the room. Rose sat quite still, leaning forward a little, as if listening to something, her hands, one of them gloved, lying in her lap. A single swinging lamp shed its yellow light on her. The young man stamped as he turned away, and strode up and down. The agent went back into his den and settled himself for a nap.

The interminable minutes trailed by, till the

red-bearded man roused himself and the belated express train came along. Valentine quietly watched it arrive and depart. A tall, shambling man was the sole passenger who alighted. He was solemnly received by a man who had come in a wagon, and they drove away together.

"That's our minister," the agent said. "Been to bury his wife. I'm durned sorry for him. Was n't this your train?"

"Yes," answered Valentine, "but I have decided to change my course."

The man peered at him with natural suspicion.

"Can you send a telegram for me?" asked he, irritated by this scrutiny. The agent nodded. Valentine went in and wrote. The dispatch was addressed to Miss Jeffreys, and contained these words: "Delayed. Will write."

He seemed to see Miss Jeffreys' fair face as he listened to the clicking that carried his message. Then he went into the other room. It was empty, but in a moment Rose came in from out-doors, holding her hands tightly locked together. She started violently at sight of him. "I thought you gone," she said. "I saw the train go by."

He smiled down at her. "I could not leave you to stay here alone. You might get frightened again. I shall take another train to-morrow."

She clenched her hands harder than before, and her color came and went. He made her sit down.

"What are you going to do in Canada?" he asked.

"I go to my aunt in the convent," she said. "I go to school there."

He leaned forward surprised. "But you will not be a nun?" he protested.

"Not now, not at first. But after a while, why not? My aunt say she happy. I not like things, going about, dancing. Oh, no. I want to be happy. I will try her way. Why not?"

Why not, indeed? Valentine could not say.

At last, he urged her to try to sleep. With gentle courtesy he arranged his overcoat and made her a pillow. She obeyed him with weary submissiveness. When she laid down her head, he bent over and smiled in her trusting eyes. They drooped and closed under his.

He left her, rejoiced to see that the scrawny custodian was again asleep in the other room, went out, and paced back and forth under the sky. Sometimes he returned to the door, to see if Rose was safe, but he dared not go near her. Pain and passion filled his soul. A nun! That child, with those unfathomable eyes! Up and down, up and down, he walked. When he had let his train go on without him, his only con-

scious intention had been to stay near and guard her through the night, but now all intention was whirled away in the trouble of his mind. All the elements of his life rushed in turmoil about his imagination. He ached in every pulse, and set his teeth, wrestling like an athlete with himself.

Sometimes the agent waked, prompt to do some duty. Thrice a train whizzed by. Valentine kept on his walk. He dared not stop. Some horror seemed waiting to clutch him if he stopped. He remembered that in old times a young man kept vigil for a night before he received his spurs. It occurred to him as a sort of mocking fantasy that this autumn night was his vigil. He stared at the stars, and called on God for help in his extremity. The hours dragged slow as torturing wheels might revolve. How long she slept, how peacefully !

The whole of wisdom and virtue is seldom gained in one struggle, however sore it be. Perhaps it did not augur very ill for Valentine's future, if out of this vigil he brought only his honor.

In the early dawn Rose woke, and sat up, confusedly looking about her. There was bustle in the station now, and many people were moving here and there. She started gladly towards Valentine, when she saw him enter the

door. He was very pale, but he smiled at sight of her, and led her out to get some breakfast at a very scantily furnished booth in another room.

When, a little later, the train which she was to take arrived, he entered it with her. He had not explained his purpose to her, nor had he defined it to himself. He acted almost without volition or conscious intelligence, like a person who had been drugged. All that he did seemed unreal to him, yet underneath the stupor of his mind he must have had some idea of the end towards which all his actions tended. Certain it is that after he had carried Rose to her home he took her away again, without the delay of a single hour more than was necessary for the ceremonies that made her his wife. This desperate deed accomplished, the dreamy torpor rolled slowly from his brain, and he felt that real life was closing in around him once more.

He had borne the contact with the Beauvais family as best he might. It did not affect him much in his peculiar mental condition, but something in Celia impressed him, as it had always impressed him, in a way that promised possible satisfaction in any relation to her, should there ever come some simple but vital need of help in his life and Rose's. Of his own friends, he saw only his mother and sister, before sailing with his wife for Europe. Every-

body else except Miss Jeffreys ignored his extraordinary marriage. She wrote him a kind, regretful letter. As nearly as he could, he told his mother the whole story.

"Oh, Jack," she groaned, "that you should have risked all your life on such a chance!"

"I suppose it is a chance," he answered, "but it is one that has overwhelmed me."

On the day her son was to sail, the mother saw Rose for a single hour. She went to the meeting with intolerable repugnance. The girl was daintily clad in a manner that heightened the delicacy of her appearance. There was something so pathetic in her strange beauty, in the puzzled look in her dark eyes, in the dumb devotion with which they met the tenderness in Valentine's gaze, that the mother's heart was softened and eased of some of its pain. She reflected that she had known many marriages in which the obstacles to happiness, if less obvious, had not been less real, than in this case, and some of them had not turned out badly; but then, alas, this marriage was her own son's, and that made it a more serious matter.

When they bade each other farewell, Valentine put his hand on his bride's shoulder.

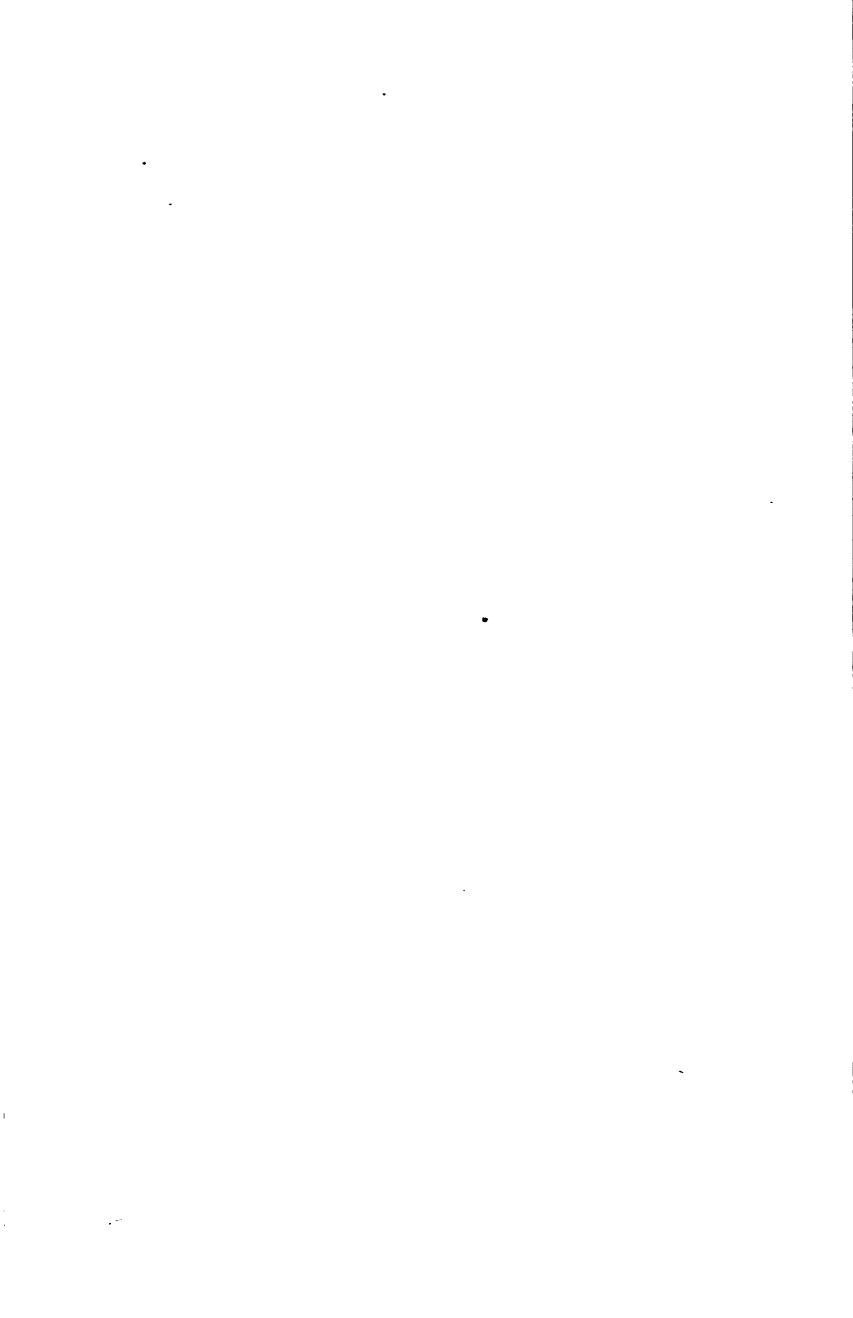
"I shall not bring her back," he said, "till I know my fate; but I am not afraid."

Rose looked up, wondering what he meant;

then suddenly took his hand off her shoulder and held it in her own. She turned to the other woman in her old calm, frank way, and said, taking great pains to pronounce correctly, —

“He is very good to me. We are happy.”

“Oh, God keep you so!” cried the mother through quick tears.



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